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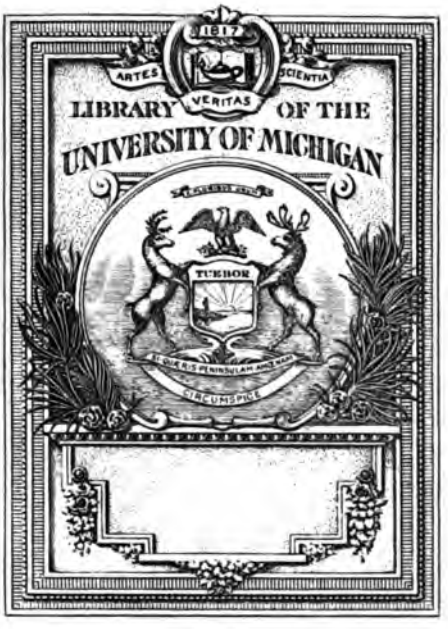
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EDUCATION, ON REFLECTION,

AND ON

VARIOUS OTHER TOPICS.

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ON THE

GREATNESS OF GOD IN THE WORKS OF NATURE

AND IN

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD,

ON

CHARITY,

AND ON

VARIOUS OTHER TOPICS;

FROM THE GERMAN OF THE

REV. GEORGE JOACHIM ZOLLIKOFER,

MINISTER OF THE REFORMED CONGREGATION AT LEIPSICK.

By the Rev. William Tooke, F. R. S.

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SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS TOPICS.

SERMON XXXII.

God is Love.

GOD, thou firſt and greateſt of all beings, abſolutely perfect, the creator and father of all, we are here congregated in thy preſence, to devote ourſelves to the moſt ſublime, the moſt bliſsful occupation of which mankind is capable, the contemplation of thee; to contemplate thee as the eternal, ever flowing and inexhauſtible fount of life, of ſatisfaction, of joy, of happineſs — as eſſential love! May we in purſuing this loftieſt of all themes ſuſpend at leaſt for the time every inveterate habit of vice, ſhake off every riſing propenſity to evil; for the place whereon we ſtand is holy ground. And may that pure ſpirit of truth, which alone is able to guide us into all truth, aſſiſt our conceptions, that they may be worthy of thee, and ſuch as befits creatures to whom thou haſt been ſo eminently kind, and whom thou haſt ſo highly favoured! Ah, may it raiſe our minds, enlarge our hearts, that we may behold thy glory, be ſenſible to thy love, and in the lively ſenſe of it be happy! — Now, while we are laboriouſly ſtriving to repudiate every low terreſtrial

idea — laboriouſly endeavouring to elevate our minds to thee, myriads of ſuperior unencumbered ſpirits are adoring thee as the God of love, and, entirely pervaded by the ſentiment of thy love, enjoy extatic, ineffable felicities! Oh, that at leaſt one ray of that more brilliant light which enlightens them, one ſpark of that ſuperior life, of that more fervent devotion which animates them, might glance into our hearts, inflame them with thy love, and enable us to know and to feel, ſomewhat of that which no intelligent being can underſtand and feel without joy and felicity, and what hereafter will be the ſupreme joy and everlaſting felicity of us and all mankind, of all intelligent beings! God, affectionate parent, even now may thy love be glorified in us, ſtrengthen our weakneſs, quicken our dying life, and cauſe us every where to perceive thee and to feel thy love! — To thee who liveſt and reigneſt for ever the God of our ſalvation and hope, we thy reaſonable creatures, in the name of Chriſt, and in full reliance on his promiſes, aſk of thee theſe graces, and thus further addreſs thee: Our father, &c.

JOHN iv. 16.

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.

GOD is love! Who, my dear friends, who has ever expreſſed ſo much truth, ſo much ſublime, all involving, heart and ſoul rejoicing truth, in ſo few words as the apoſtle of Jeſus in our text? And who

who was more capable, as far as man is capable, of being thoroughly ſenſible to this truth, than he, the favourite of our Lord, the moſt affectionate diſciple of the tendereſt maſter; he, whoſe ſenſible, ſentimental heart was continually overflowing with love, who embraced all the confeſſors of Jeſus with ſuch a glowing cordiality, and even in his extreme old age preached love to them as the firſt and greateſt commandment of chriſtianity, as the pureſt ſource of virtue and of felicity? — — But who of us, my pious hearers, who of all the children of men, which of all created beings can thoroughly apprehend the idea, the grand, the glorious idea, God is love? Whoſe heart is ſo large, ſo pure and ſtrong, as to be thoroughly warmed and pervaded by the ſublimeſt of all ſentiments, the ſentiment that God is love, and not faint under it? — — To us, my chriſtian brothers and ſiſters, who are this day aſſembled to enjoy the repaſt of love, to us this idea cannot be foreign, this ſentiment cannot be unknown. But whether this idea diffuſes a light, a clear and radiant light upon our minds; whether this ſentiment is productive of life and felicity to us, is a queſtion of high importance. Such is its proper effect, my dear friends, and this it will infallibly produce, if we open the avenues of our hearts to its genial influence. Oh then, might I be ſo happy as, in theſe moments devoted to religious inſtruction, to give you a full view of this firſt, this grandeſt of all truths, the truth, that God is love, render it truly

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SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS TOPICS.

affecting to your hearts, and by it diffuſe joy and felicity within you and about you!

But where ſhall I begin — where break off — in attempting to demonſtrate a fact, which has more proofs in its behalf, than there are ſtars in the firmament and ſands on the ſea ſhore; which is proved and will be for ever proved by every living, ſenſitive, intelligent, improvable being in heaven and on earth? — God is love, he intends the welfare of all his creatures, deſigns them to be happy, delights in their happineſs, is inceſſantly promoting it in all poſſible methods, and finds in the promotion of it his own ſupreme felicity: this, o man, this all nature declares to thee and particularly thy own, the human nature; this is declared to thee by all religion and particularly by chriſtianity in the ſupper of our lord, in a voice ſo diſtinct and clear that it cannot be miſtaken.

Only open thy eyes, caſt thy looks around thee in the univerſe of thy God, conſider all the parts of its œconomy, all its inhabitants, all its goods, and ſee whether thou doſt not everywhere diſcern the ſhining traces of benevolence, of parental care and tenderneſs, the moſt glorious proviſions for the happineſs of all that is and lives, and particularly for thy own. — The earth that bears thee; its lovely, ſmiling aſpect that gladdens thy heart; the air which thou breatheſt; the food which nouriſhes and ſtrengthens thee; the liquors that refreſh thee; the garment that covers thee; the dwelling that ſhelters

helters thee ; the glory of the meads, the fields, the mountains, the waters, the foreſts which are diſplayed to thy view in every ſeaſon of the year in ſuch a different garb ; the diverſity, the beauty, the utility of the trees, the ſhrubs, the plants, the herbs ; the fragrance and the artificial texture of the flowers ; the blithe warbling of the birds ; the ſportive geſtures of the animals atteſting the ſentiment of ſelf and the exuberance of joy ; the various, inexhauſtible energies concentrated in all living and lifeleſs creatures, and unfolding and appearing in numberleſs ways ; their general, ever-active propenſity to approach and unite ; their mutual dependence and connection ; the continual preſervation and propagation of the ſeveral ſpecies ; the inceſſant augmentation of life and action among mankind and the brute creation ; the innumerable kinds of the pleaſure and the ſatisfaction of which they are ſeverally capable, to the gratification whereof they all know and find the proper ſources and means, and which they all, more or leſs, in one way or another enjoy ; the jovial ſwarms of various ſenſitive beings, glad of their exiſtence, revelling in the air and on the ground, on the hills and in the dales, on the leaf of the lowlieſt ſhrub and in the ſummits of the loftieſt trees, which thou mayſt ſee and hear and trace in a ſingle day of ſpring or ſummer and within the limits of a moderate field : what do all theſe proclaim to thee, but, God is love ; he creates and preſerves

and diffeminates everywhere life and joy and happineſs.

And then, o man, the ſun, which enlightens and warms thee, and fertilizes and bleſſes thy fields; the moon, that with ſerener ray illumes and cheers the melancholy face of night; the evening that conſtantly ſhuts in the day, and the morning that regularly reſtores the light; the countleſs hoſt of ſtars that raviſh and exalt thy ſoul, that lifts it to the deity, and at laſt abſorbs it in extatic tranſports of anticipations, hopes and proſpects: what ſays all this to thee, but, God is love, and his love is inexhauſtible in bounty; it ſtretches as far as the expanſe of heaven extends; it embraces all worlds, and there is no ſpecies of joy, of pleaſure, of happineſs, that is not enjoyed in its immenſe dominion.

And if thou now proceed to conſider thy nature, human nature in particular, o man, how plainly does it teſtify, that God is love! — Thy ſight, thy hearing, thy ſmell, thy taſte, thy touch, what artificial organs, what watchful, ever-active ſpies and reporters of the moſt varied delight, the moſt agreeable ſenſations! Canſt thou open thy eyes, without beholding innumerable wonders and beauties in the univerſe of God? Canſt thou hearken, and not hear the various ſounds of truth, of wiſdom, of humanity, of friendſhip, of joy, or of pity, and conſolation? Canſt thou ever provide for thy ſupport by meat and drink, but thy taſte and thy ſmell

are gratified and regaled in various ways? Are not motion and reſt, labour and recreation, the works of nature and the works of art ſources of moſt agreeable ſenſations? Canſt thou ever uſe one of thy limbs, without admiring its pliancy, its manifold utility, its accurate connection with the body, and rejoicing in the many good purpoſes to which thou canſt make it ſubſervient? And who has endowed thee with theſe organs of ſenſe, with theſe curiouſly contrived members? Who eſtabliſhed this relation between them and outward objects? Is it not God, and muſt not the God who has thus conſtructed thy body, be love?

And thy mind, o man, which can notice, apprehend, enjoy, rejoice in all this; thy ſoul, which can think, with conſciouſneſs think, collect, compare, aſſociate its ideas, lay them up for future uſe and increaſe them to infinity; thy mind, which can inquire, examine, diſcover, conclude from viſible objects concerning inviſible, from the effects infer the cauſe, aſcend from the creatures to the creator, and at once take in both heaven and earth, time and eternity; thy mind, which is ſuſceptible of the pleaſure that ſprings from the knowledge of truth and the inceſſant advancement in it, is able to entertain the exalted hope of immortality, to procure itſelf, in the moſt ſequeſtered ſolitude, in the profoundeſt ſhades of night, the pureſt, the ſublimeſt joys, and feels that it is deſigned for ſtill ſuperior delights: how diſtinctly does this teſtify, that God

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is love, that he has created thee for happineſs and made thee capable of it to an eminent degree?

Yes, God is love; this is confirmed alſo by our moral nature. We need not follow the mere impulſe of mechanical forces, not blindly act by irreſiſtible inſtinct. We may propoſe to ourſelves aims, purſue, attain them — can chuſe between the good and bad, the better and the worſe, — act upon clearly known principles and perceptions, — ſtrive after higher perfection and approach it perpetually nearer. — We are capable of adopting a legitimate rule of conduct, of generous ſentiments, of diſintereſted, magnanimous actions, of ſpiritual, empyreal pleaſures — can continually enlarge our ſphere of action, improve our condition, ſtrengthen and increaſe our abilities by exerciſe, refine and dignify our nature, and become ever wiſer, ever better, ever more godlike; we can participate with the deity in the pleaſure of pure beneficence. Could our mind and our heart more diſtinctly ſay, God is love? Yes, aſſuredly he is love, for,

Likewiſe within us, his creatures and children, he has implanted a love for one another, has aſſociated with every ſentiment and exertion of love, felicity and joy, with every defect and every violation of it grief and miſery; has fixed in our hearts the ſtrongeſt propenſity to ſociability, to intercourſe, to intimate connection with one another, the ſtrongeſt propenſity to compaſſion, to relief, to beneficence, to the mutual communication of our ſatisfactions and plea-

pleaſures; —has made every true friend of humanity honourable to his brethren, and impreſſed him as it were with the ſtamp of divinity, and whenever, hoodwinked by ſelf-intereſt and paſſion, we act contrary to it, we thus put ourſelves in an unnatural, violent, extremely diſagreeable ſtate, ceaſe to be contented and happy, and feel, more or leſs, that we have thereby obſcured the faireſt lineament of the divine ſimilitude in us, and belied our celeſtial origin. Thus clearly, my dear friends, does all nature, and particularly the nature of man, atteſt that God is love!

And the ſame thing is loudly proclaimed to us by religion in general and by chriſtianity in particular. God is love: this we are taught by the ſcope and deſign; this we are taught by the whole ſubject-matter of religion. Or what may be the deſign of religion? Is it to impoſe burdens upon us, to make us melancholy, faint-hearted, to forbid us all pleaſure, or to mingle it with bitterneſs, to inſpire us with dread and horror of God, to render us gloomy, ſullen, unſocial, to make us ſelf-tormentors? Nay but exactly the reverſe of all this. It is deſigned to alleviate to us the unavoidable burdens of life, to level and cheer the path of it, to ſweeten its bitterneſs, to refine and multiply its innocent pleaſures, to preſerve us from folly and ſin and thereby from the generality and the greateſt of evils, to lead us to wiſdom and virtue, and by their means to the enjoyment of the pureſt ſatisfactions, to give us hope

and confidence in God, to teach us moderation and contentment, to form us into ſincere and active friends of humanity, and even to make the afflictions of life beneficial and the thoughts of death conſoling. Such, my dear friends, is the deſign and appointment of religion: ſuch the affectionate purpoſe of the God from whom we received it! And what is the tendency of its doctrines, its precepts, its promiſes? Are they not all calculated to diffuſe life and joy and happineſs within us and without us? Or,

Is the deity not love, who reveals himſelf to us as the creator, the preſerver, the ſovereign, the father of the univerſe and of all mankind; who certifies us that his watchful eye of providence extends to all, even beneath the minuteſt affairs of mankind, to the ſeemingly leſs important actions of the ſenſible and inanimate world; that the lilies of the field owe their little honours to his forming hand; that the fall of the meaneſt ſparrow is not diſregarded by his obſerving eye; and that in his book, not only the lives of men, but the very hairs of their heads are numbered, — that he knows our neceſſities and deſires before they are formed into prayer, that he is never far from any one of us, though far indeed removed from us in his eſſence, he, by his influence ſurrounds us all; that this paternal affection is not confined to any one ſect or nation, but diffuſed in one common care over all the ſons of men: that in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteouſneſs is accepted of him: that he inhabits inacceſſible light,

light, undiſcerned, indiſcernible by men; that yet he is not indolent and inactive to neglect or forget us, but that without his conſent nothing can befall us, that he is conſtantly near us with grace and help? — — Is that God not love, who allows us, who commands us, with filial frankneſs to approach him, to pour out our hearts without reſerve before him, and always to expect the beſt of his paternal providence? Who like a tender parent recalls even his prodigal, guilty children from the error of their ways, giving them to know, that he is ready to receive them again, to ſpare them, to forgive them their ſins and failings, to ſave them from their fatal conſequences, to conduct them to happineſs, if they will only turn to him, change their temper and their courſe of life and ſubmit to be led and guided by him? — — Is that God not love, who prohibits us nothing except what is hurtful to ourſelves and our brethren, what would be degrading both to them and us, would diminiſh and diſturb more elevated pleaſures, rob us of more laſting ſatisfactions, and bring pain and miſery upon us; and enjoins us nothing but what is good and profitable in itſelf and in its conſequences, what procures to us and to others health and life, vigour and vivacity of mind, tranquillity of heart, contentment and joy, what may promote and confirm the general intereſt equally with our own, our preſent and future happineſs? — — Is that God not love, who is ſo entirely deſirous that all men ſhould come to the knowledge of the truth, and attain

attain to the poſſeſſion of eternal happineſs, that he promiſes moſt expreſsly to ſend his holy ſpirit to aſſiſt our endeavours to attain it, who offers us his moſt gracious aid in the performance of our duties, help in time of need, a ſafe-guard in dangers, ſolace in afflictions, deliverance in death, emancipation from the grave and corruption, everlaſting life, interminating, continually increaſing happineſs? Does not therefore all religion loudly teſtify that God is love?

And chriſtianity in particular, what a prodigious weight does that give to this teſtimony! How glorioufly does it ſet its ſeal to this comfortable truth! Oh, my dear friends, can we conſider what God has done for us through Jeſus, and yet entertain a doubt, that he is eſſential love! What heights, what depths of love, of love unutterable, do we here diſcover! What is the whole of chriſtianity but love? Ah, ſurely love is the ſubſtance of all the grand, the glorious arrangements which God has made for the recovery of ſinful man! That he, that happy and only potentate, that lord of all dominion who alone poſſeſſes immortality, the perfect being, the ſelf-originated, all-ſufficient deity, ſhould ſend to us on earth his ſon, the only-begotten, the well-beloved, to us, helpleſs, forlorn, unworthy mortals, proclaim to us by him deliverance, favour, life, felicity, certify us of his more than parental tenderneſs, and cauſe him to die on the croſs as a ſacrifice for the ſins of the world; is this not love, pure, efficacious,

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matchleſs, ſtupendous love? — Love is the baſis of all that Jeſus taught, did, ſuffered in behalf of mankind. That he, the lord of glory, irradiated with divine effulgence, bleſſed with celeſtial joy, before whom the hoſts of heaven bow, whom all the angels worſhip, that he ſhould leave the realms of bliſs, take upon him the limitations, the hardſhips, the burdens of the terreſtrial life, exchange his throne for the ſtate of a ſervant, his bright abode for the dark night of human miſery, and at laſt condeſcend to undergo moſt cruel ſufferings and an ignominious death, is that not love, ineffable inconceivable love? And did he not perform and ſuffer all this for convincing mankind of the truth, for convincing them by the moſt palpable and irrefutable proofs, that the deity who had ſent him, and whoſe work he finiſhed on earth, is love? Yes, my dear friends, every doctrine that he delivered, every act that he performed, every inſtance of relief that he afforded, every patient that he made whole, every perturbed mind that he ſoothed, every profligate whom he reformed every prerogative that he voluntarily ſurrendered, every ſatisfaction that he gave up, every trouble that he took upon him, every affliction that he bore, every pang that pierced his heart, every tear that flowed from his eyes, was a proof, a manifeſt proof that God is ever inclined to ſuccour mankind, to deliver them, to do them good, to bleſs and proſper them, that he is eſſential love.

And what breathe all the commandments that God

God has given us by his ſon Jeſus, but love? What is their tendency but love, univerſal, diſintereſted, generous, active love among chriſtians, amongſt all mankind? Love is the ſum and the fulfilling of the law, the vital ſpirit of chriſtianity, the diſtinctive character of the diſciples of our lord, the honour and the nobility of every genuine chriſtian, the rule by which all our fates will be determined at that great day, the day of judgment and of retribution; and the God who gave us theſe commandments, who preſcribed and ſanctioned theſe laws, who eſtabliſhed them as the rule of our life and the ſource of our felicity, the God with whom mercy is of more account than ſacrifice, to whom relief adminiſtered to the wretched is of greater value than ſabbaths and feſtivals, and who beholds nothing with more inward complacency, than the mutual benevolence and beneficence of his children, muſt he not be conſummate efficacious love?

And in ſhort what is this repaſt whereof we are now aſſembled to partake, but a banquet of love, the love of God, the love of Jeſus, the love of our brethren? Here we are to have fellowſhip with the father and with the ſon, and fellowſhip one with another, — to rejoice in the father as our tendereſt, moſt gracious parent, and in his ſon as our deliverer and ſaviour, and in one another as his brethren and his ſiſters. Here we are to enjoy the entire felicity of a family united in affection, met to celebrate the feſtival of their firſt-born brother, through whom the father

father has bleſſed and ſtill bleſſes them all, and rejoicing by anticipation in that happy hour when he ſhall return, and gather them to him, that where he is there they ſhall alſo be. — — Thus, my pious hearers, do heaven and earth, nature and religion, the deſtination of man and the deſign of chriſtianity, all that God has done, and all that he has commanded and promiſed us, with one united voice, in terms diſtinct and clear, proclaim the everlaſting truth, that, God is love!

And this truth, my dear friends, ſhould no idea of apparent diſorder, of imaginary or real evil in the world; no ſentiment of diſtreſs, of affliction, of pain; no miſcarriage of our aims and deſires ſhould ſever or obliterate from our minds this moſt conſoling, moſt certain of all truths!

No, God is love, but wiſe and ſagacious love, which decrees not ends without means; chuſes not every good, but only the beſt means to thoſe ends; is not profuſe of benefactions without diſcrimination, without reaſon, without choice, but is always kind in that method and proportion as is beſt ſuited to the capacities, the wants, the connections of his creatures and the greateſt poſſible benefit of his family at large. God is love, but prudent, righteous love, not fondly complying with every wiſh of his children, not gratifying all their cupidities, which are often incompatible and fooliſh, but knowing when to withdraw from them abuſed, or pernicious bounties, dangerous ſucceſſes, and even to viſit them

with direful calamities, whenever it is meet and ſalutary for them and agreeable to his ſuperior, though hidden purpoſes. God is love, but impartial, univerſal love, encircling all that he has created, intereſted in all, rendering all, ſooner or later, thus or otherwiſe, happy; diſpenſing indeed largeſſes according to his wiſe good-pleaſure, but never treating one with exceſſive indulgence and another with extreme ſeverity, never without reaſon withholding from one what he grants without reaſon to the other; never, in the ſenſe in which it is taken among mankind, propitious or unpropitious, inclined or averſe, eaſy or difficult to be intreated. — — God is love, but is love as God, as the ſupremely perfect being, incapable of any human infirmity, of any human paſſion; combining with the moſt inward, efficacious propenſity to beneficence an infallible underſtanding, an unalterable attachment to truth and order, and in all that he decrees, permits and does, takes into conſideration the preſent and the future, time and eternity, particulars and the whole.

Conſider this, o man, ſo wilt thou never doubt the truth, that God is love, — even then not doubt it, when he chaſtens and puniſhes thee or thy brethren, when he refuſes thee or thy brethren any of your petitions, when he leads and conducts thee or thy brethren otherwiſe than is agreeable to your apprehenſions and wiſhes! Only forget not that thou art child and that he is father, and that the diſtance between him and thee is far greater,

infinitely

infinitely greater, than the diſtance between the knowledge of the new-born babe and the ſagacity of the wiſeſt and beſt of all earthly parents.

Yes, God is love, my dear brethren! This ſhall now be to us a demonſtrated, eternally eſtabliſhed truth! As ſurely as God is, ſo ſurely is he love! And that he is, we are certified by every thought of our mind, by every motion of our body, every pulſation of our blood; of that we are certified by the heavens and the earth, the ſun and the atom of duſt, the morning and the evening, the brute and the man; of that we are certified by every thing that has exiſtence and life and breath!

Yes, God is love, of this will we aſſure ourſelves, as often as we lie down to ſleep, and as often as we awake from ſleep again; whenever anything agreeable, and whenever anything adverſe befalls us; whenever we are ſummoned to fulfill any duty, and whenever we are called to bear any affliction; whenever we go forth to our work, and whenever we recreate ourſelves after it by innocent pleaſure; whenever we are ſolaced in the company of good, and whenever we are injured by wicked men; whenever we are forced to admire the methods of his government as blameleſs and holy, and whenever we cannot explain and comprehend them; whenever we think on life, and whenever we meditate on death!

Yes, God is love! This will we affirm to each other, whenever the troubles and inconveniences

of life bear hard upon us; whenever we have ſocial duties to fulfill and ſocial ſatisfactions to enjoy; whenever we aſſemble and meet together here or there, in our houſes or the houſe of God, to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at his hands, to ſet forth his moſt worthy praiſe, to hear his moſt holy word, and to aſk thoſe things which are requiſite and neceſſary, as well for the body as the ſoul, for the particular celebration of his more reſplendent mercies, for interceſſion, for his public adoration and worſhip!

Yes, God is love! In this will we even now rejoice at the feaſt of his love and the love of his ſon Jeſus; this ſhall even now give us hope and affiance in him, — ſhall enable us to draw near with boldneſs, with truly filial boldneſs to his throne of grace, there to ſeek and find whatever can render us really happy! There the bread that is broken, the wine that is poured out ſhall ſay to us: God is love, and is ſo as certainly as thou eateſt of this bread and drinkeſt this wine, for from love, from matchleſs love, he ſent his ſon to thee and for thee ſubmitted him to death! And Jeſus, whoſe memorial thou art ſolemnizing here, with whom thou haſt here communion, is the expreſs image of his father — is viſible, incarnate love divine! He loved thee even unto death, — loved thee more than his life, more than the glory which he had with the father, before the foundation of the world! For that he left for thee, that he voluntarily ſacrificed to the ſatisfaction of

delivering

delivering and ſaving thee! And couldſt thou ſtill doubt of his love? Couldſt thou ſtill doubt the love of thy heavenly father? Oh what mayſt thou, what ſhouldſt thou not now expect of this God, of this ſaviour! — Yes, in proſperity and in adverſity, in life and in death, here and there and every where, now and then, in the preſent and in the future world, from eternity to eternity God is and will be love! Rejoice, o man, that thou art a man, o chriſtian, that thou art a chriſtian! Be glad in this thy happineſs! Glory in it before God and the world! Let this grand and glorious ſentiment be thy guide and companion all the reſt of thy life, carry it with thee into the tomb, take it with thee into the better world! For ever wilt thou find it true and grand and inexhauſtible; and for ever wilt thou, with all the bleſſed, that ſtand before the throne of the Higheſt, and aſſemble about it from all quarters of the immenſe territory of his empire, bear witneſs to its truth, and with them in lofty ſongs of triumph join the celeſtial choir in one holy act of adoration, and ſay, Thou art worthy, o Lord, who ſitteſt upon the throne, and liveſt for ever and ever, to receive glory and honour and power. God is love! God is pure eſſential love! Amen! Hallelujah! Amen!

Communion.

SERMON XXXIII.

If God be Love, what follows.

GOD, who from eternity to eternity enjoyeſt the ſupreme felicity, becauſe from eternity to eternity thou art continually diffuſing and producing life and felicity all around thee, how great is our happineſs in knowing thee as the God of love, as the God who conſtantly wills and does the beſt, who is gracious and merciful to all his creatures, and conducts them all, though in very diverſe ways, to perfection and happineſs! It is the joy and conſolation of our hearts, that we need not fear thee with ſervile dread, but ſhould love thee with filial affection! That we can rejoice in thy exiſtence, thy inſpection and government, all thy ordinances and laws, that thou, the Lord God omnipotent, reigneſt, that we can entertain a rational and firm reliance on the rectitude and benignity of thy adminiſtration, and behold all the events that befall us, whether we call them good or evil, whether we feel them to be agreeable or painful, fulfilling the purpoſes of thy conſummate wiſdom and unbounded love! That without thy permiſſion and appointment, o heavenly Father,

ther, nothing comes to paſs; and though clouds and darkneſs are often round about thee, juſtice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne, mercy and truth go before thy face! That we can rejoice in our life and in our death; that in the thought of thee, that thou art eſſential love, we can find ſo much light, ſo much comfort, ſo much motive and ability to the practice of virtue, ſo much hope and felicity! Oh that this thought were ever preſent to our minds, ever important to our hearts, oh that it were the leading principle of all our other thoughts, the ſoul of all our emotions! How wiſe, how virtuous, how good, how blithe and happy ſhould we be both living and dying, and through the gate and grave of death paſs over to the celeſtial life, and through all the ſtages of eternal exiſtence be ever approaching nearer to thee and to perfection! Ah, cauſe us even now to experience the efficacy, the ſacred efficacy of this idea, feel it in all its truth, in all its weight, and become better and happier by it! Teach us however to combine it with ſo many other of our ideas, feelings and concerns that it may never eſcape our recollection, and more than any other ſentiment live and rule within us, and operate upon our conduct. Bleſs to that end the doctrines of truth, on which we purpoſe now to reflect, and cauſe them, while they tend to promote our happineſs, to tend alſo to the glorification of thy love. We addreſs our prayers to thee for theſe bleſſings as the votaries of thy ſon Jeſus, who has revealed

thee to us as the God of love, and invoke thee farther in his name: Our father, &c.

1 JOHN iv. 16.

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.

IT is one great excellence of the chriſtian doctrine, and a token of its celeſtial origin, that it contains but few maxims, and preſcribes but few commandments to its profeſſors; but maxims calculated to furniſh mankind with all needful and ſalutary information, commandments that are adapted to conduct them ſafely in all the circumſtances of life. God is thy father; he is eſſential love; his ſon Jeſus is a helper out of all diſtreſs; death a paſſage into life; to death ſucceed judgment and retribution: this is the whole purport of chriſtianity. Love God, love thy neighbour, truſt in Jeſus and follow his example, look not ſolely at the preſent, but alſo at the future: this is the ſum of all its commandments. But how much do theſe few maxims and commandments contain! How rich in momentous, ſoothing conſequences to the chriſtian, who believes them with inward conviction, and makes them the ruling principle of that he conceives and does. — Take for example the propoſition laid down in our text. What conſequences flow from the grand, ſublime idea:

God is love! What matter for reflection, what luminous results, what bliſsful ſenſations it imparts to the chriſtian! We will make this the ſubject of our conſideration at preſent, my pious hearers, and thus exerciſe ourſelves in reflecting on the doctrines of chriſtianity. Let us then proceed to inquire: what follows, if God be love.

No truth is more fertile than this. It embraces every thing, explains every thing, ſheds light and comfort and felicity on every thing. Whoever is pervaded and animated by its force, muſt of neceſſity be good and happy and be always becoming better and happier. Indeed we can only indicate a few conſequences reſulting from this inexhauſtibly conſequential truth, but even theſe may inform, pacify, conſole and gladden us in many of the trying ſituations of life.

I. God is love: therefore his commands are not the commands of an auſtere, capricious deſpot, iſſued to ſhew his power and ſupremacy, or to make us feel his authority, but directions to the attainment of that happineſs for which he has deſigned us, and which we abſolutely cannot attain unleſs we ſeek it in the way which he has pointed out, and do that which he has enjoined us to do. Therefore neither are his prohibitions the prohibitions of an envious, jealous, malignant being, determined to be joyful alone, alone free, alone happy, but admonitions of love, ever watchful to guard us from whatever would be hurtful to us, to keep us from every devious

devious and intricate path, from every action which we ſhould hereafter repent, from every pleaſure which would end in pain, and protect us from every danger, from the forfeiture of good, and from lapſing into miſery. Yes, this and nought elſe is the purport of all the precepts which God has given us: their baſis is benevolence and love, their obſervance is the means and the way to felicity — frequently the actual enjoyment of it, in the very keeping of them there is great reward. Certainly he who does not rejoice in being under the ſceptre of God and fain would withdraw from his inſpection, knows him not, takes him not for what he is, and blaſphemes the God of love as a miſanthropical tyrant. He who ſighs under the eaſy yoke of his laws, and looks upon them as a reſtraint and a burden and would fain be abſolved from the obſervance of them, is blind to his own intereſt, and prefers the ſevereſt bondage to perfect freedom. Oh let this never be forgotten by us, my dear friends, and when our conſcience, when the teacher of religion ſays to us on the part of God: let go that unjuſt advantage, deny that deceitful luſt, ſacrifice that innocent pleaſure to the benefit of thy brother, reſtrain thy anger, ſuppreſs thy revenge, requite evil with good, the ſuggeſtion will be always reinforced by the conſideration: this is required of me by God, who is pure love, this muſt aſſuredly be uſeful and profitable to me, it is impoſſible that I can loſe any thing by it, to obey him is to be happy.

II. God

II. God is love: therefore not only the goods that he beſtows, but likewiſe the evils that he inflicts upon us, not only the ſatisfactions which he allows us to enjoy, but alſo the afflictions that he lays upon us, are benefits, effects and proofs of his love — or may and are deſigned to be ſo. Never, imprint this deeply in thy mind, o man, thou who wouldſt conceive worthily of God, form right apprehenſions of his diſpenſations and make the proper uſe of them, never does he ſuffer any evil to overtake thee, becauſe it is an evil and is diſagreeable or diſtreſſing to thee, — never any pain to ſeize thee, becauſe it racks thy nerves, — never any ſorrow to oppreſs thee, becauſe it oppreſſes and afflicts thee! That would not be benevolence, not love, it would be malice and cruelty. But he cauſes calamity, pain, trouble to come upon thee, in order to warn thee, to admoniſh, to correct, to exerciſe thee; that thou mayſt not be deprived of other, far more conſiderable benefits; in order to ward off ſtill greater evils more pungent ſufferings; in order to make thee capable of ſuperior, more durable ſatisfactions and benefits. Fain would he ſpare thee theſe calamities, theſe pains, theſe ſufferings; fain would he give thee to inherit pure unmingled joy, if it were conſiſtent with thy nature, with thy capacities, with thy conduct, with thy preſent ſituation, if thou couldſt thereby become as intelligent, as wiſe, as virtuous, as happy, as thou canſt thus become. Be then the way which God leads thee,

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ever ſo rugged and dreary, beſet with ever ſo many rubs and difficulties, ſtill however it is the road that leads direct to perfection and happineſs. If thou follow it, thou canſt not poſſibly be wrong, not poſſibly fail of the prize. Never forget this, o man, whether it fare with thee well or ill. Revere all, all the diſpenſations of thy God as the diſpenſations of ſovereign love. Accept the ill no leſs than the good with gratitude from his hand; the former is a benefit as well as the latter, if thou uſe it according to his will and to the furtherance of his views.

III. God is love: therefore he never puniſhes, for the ſake of puniſhing, never chaſtiſes for the ſake of chaſtiſing; therefore his chaſtiſements and puniſhments have not revenge, not ſatisfaction for his injured honour, not compenſation for any loſs ſuſtained, but ſimply correction and caution in view; correction of the ſinner if he be yet corrigible, caution to the innocent, who may likewiſe err, and to the wavering and infirm, who are already ſtumbling and ready to fall. It is not thy tears, not thy ſighs, o man, not the anguiſh of thy heart, not the bitter remorſe which torments thee, when thou haſt ſinned, not the confuſion and ſorrow, not the diſtreſs and miſery, in which thou haſt involved thyſelf by thy follies, that are pleaſing to the deity, whoſe laws thou haſt tranſgreſſed. He is eſſential love; fain would he have exempted thee from theſe diſagreeable, theſe woeful ſenſations, fain have averted the baneful effects of thy follies from thee! But his love

love requires that thou ſhouldſt learn to know, to deteſt, to eſchew ſin, that ſource of all real evil, that ſole enemy and deſtroyer of thy happineſs, that thou ſhouldſt recede from the road of vice, or, which is preciſely the ſame, from the road of miſery. To this end he cauſes thy progreſs on it to be ſo difficult to thee, cauſes thee to meet at every turn with terrors and pains and calamities of various kinds, throws impediments in its courſe, or blockades its exit with impenetrable darkneſs and inſuperable difficulties, or brings thee to the brink of the precipice to which it leads, that he may ſnatch thee from it. Adore therefore the Higheſt even in his judicial viſitations and puniſhments as the God of love; humble thyſelf under his mighty hand, it is the hand of the tendereſt parent, who would not terrify thee, not chaſtiſe, not puniſh thee, did he not love thee, did he not intend to ſave and deliver thee. Only do thou ſubmit to be warned and corrected by him, to be led from thy aberrations into the way that thou ſhouldſt go, ſo wilt thou learn to know him, not as an auſtere and obdurate judge, but as the gracious and bountiful father of men; thou wilt thank him for his chaſtenings as ſo many inſtances of his kindneſs, for his puniſhments as ſo many means of ſalvation.

IV. God is love: therefore he puniſhes no one for innocent and invincible errors, however various and great; therefore he caſts and condemns no one, becauſe he has not enjoyed and could not enjoy

joy particular benefits, becauſe certain religious doctrines and duties were not known to him, and he conſequently could not admit and believe the former nor obſerve the latter. This would not be benevolence, not love, but tyranny and cruelty. Therefore, in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteouſneſs is acccepted of him, every one who does that which he is able to do according to his knowledge, according to his capacities, according to his abilities and circumſtances, and in his ſituation; therefore he would not and will not deprive any creature, any man of that perfection and happineſs whereof each is capable, be it ever ſo great or ever ſo little, of one or of another kind, whether founded on the natural or on the chriſtian revelation or yet other means of information and practice. Therefore to him, the God of love, the father of men, we may calmly reſign the fates of our brethren who have not the happineſs of being chriſtians, in the ſure belief, that he will ſo decide, and appoint them, as that we muſt all admire his wiſdom and his love.

V. God is love: therefore, not for his own ſake, but ſolely for our ſakes, he requires that we ſhould worſhip him and ſerve him; therefore he requires not of us to dread him like ſlaves, but to love him like children; therefore the ſervice that we are to yield him is not to be extorted, ſervile obedience, but the free uſe of our advantage, the blithe enjoyment of what he gives us to enjoy; therefore thou

thou needſt not enter his preſence with trepidation and affright, o thou, who knoweſt God and art deſirous to have communion with him, needſt not pray to him with doubtful ſolicitude, not be afraid to pour out thy whole heart before him, not be under any apprehenſion leſt the infinite diſtance which is between him and thee, ſhould prevent him from looking down upon thee who lieſt in the duſt before him and art duſt thyſelf, from hearing thy wiſhes and eſpouſing thy intereſts, not imagine that he would reject thy adoration and thy praiſe, becauſe they are not adequate to his greatneſs and majeſty, not believe, that only the perfectly pure and righteous man, who is nowhere to be found, or only the eloquent orator, who as well as thyſelf is a liſping infant before him, may hope for ſuccour and acceptance. No, thou mayſt frankly converſe with him, boldly draw near to him, communicate to him all thy thoughts and feelings without reſerve, as a child to his affectionate father, a friend to his generous and honourable friend. He beholds, he hears thee as well as the ſuperior ſpirits, who ſtand about his throne and pay him worthier homage. He intends thy happineſs, as certainly as he does theirs. He has opened to thee through his ſon free acceſs to him, and removed every impediment that might deter thee from him. Sincerity of heart and truſt in him, thy heavenly father, is all that he requires of thee, and theſe are well-pleaſing to him, theſe he rewards, under whatever form they may be preſented to him and in whatever phraſeology expreſſed.

VI. God

VI. God is love: therefore he deſireth not the death of a ſinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedneſs and live; therefore he is gracious, merciful, long-ſuffering, inclined to ſpare and to forgive, is extremely placable — a tender father to his loſt and undutiful children, who ſincerely bewail their backſlidings; therefore he in no wiſe caſts out ſuch as turn to him with their whole heart and ſue to him for grace and help; therefore thou mayſt boldly return to him, o man, thou who hadſt by ſin receded from him, ſtruck into devious turnings and intricacies, and now perceiveſt thy folly, lamenteſt thy misfortune, art weary of the dominion of ſin, ſigheſt for liberty, and longeſt to regain the ſlighted favour of thy heavenly father. As certainly as thou with ſincerity renounceſt ſin; as certainly as thou returneſt to the paths of duty and virtue; as certainly as earneſt deſires for the grace of heaven, and love to that God from whom thou hadſt alienated thyſelf, are ſtirring in thy ſoul, impell thee to him, fix thy eyes and thy heart entirely upon him, and force thee in confuſion of face, with hearty repentance and reſolutions of amendment to ſay: Father, I have ſinned againſt thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon, ſave me only, though by the ſevereſt methods of thy providence, from the corruption of ſin, and let me once more be capable of thy complacency: ſo certainly as thou doſt this, ſo certainly will he embrace thee with the arms of his mercy, graciouſly receive thee to him, forgive thee thy ſins,

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and caſt them into the depths of the ſea, that they may be remembered no more. In order moſt authentically to certify thee of this, to place thee in perfect liberty, and to expunge the fatal effects of thy ſins, he even ſent his ſon upon earth, and cauſed him to die upon the croſs as a ſolemn ſacrifice to ratify the covenant!

VII. God is love: therefore he ſhews all poſſible gentleneſs and indulgence to his upright worſhippers and children, has patience with their infirmities, judges them and their conduct with far greater candour and lenity, than even good men are wont to judge one another, deems of each according to his peculiar capacities and circumſtances, and requires of no one more than he in every particular caſe can afford; therefore will he aſſuredly not reject thee, thou ſincere chriſtian, whoſe ruling affections are good, whoſe endeavours to pleaſe him and to be growing continually better, are honeſt and ſtedfaſt, even though thou ſhouldſt ſometimes trip and miſtake, though thou ſhouldſt not always ſucceed in ſo perfectly maſtering thyſelf, in ſo zealouſly and cheerfully performing thy duties, in ſo entirely acquieſcing in his decrees, and in proceeding ſuch lengths in faith, in devotion, in beneficence, in the imitation of Jeſus, as thou couldſt wiſh. He knows that thy meaning is ſincere, and already ſees with complacency in that which thou now endeavoureſt to be and to do, what thou wilt hereafter accompliſh. He knows thy faculties, and thy circumſtances as well as the inmoſt receſſes of thy heart; ſees every

ohſtacle that thou meeteſt on the path of virtue, every difficulty thou haſt to encounter on thy progreſs; beholds at one view the whole of thy former and preſent ſituation, the entire ſeries of thy connections and fortunes, thy thoughts, ſenſations, purſuits and actions; takes all into conſideration, juſtly diſcriminates between guilt and misfortune, knows what ſort of creature thou art, and frequently imputes to thee the ſincere intention as a completed act, the earneſt endeavour as a ſucceſsful accompliſhment.

VIII. God is love: therefore he has the greateſt complacency in love and the moſt ſovereign averſion for all that is at enmity with it; therefore God is far more glorified by ſentiments and works of love, his will is thereby far more ſurely and better fulfilled, than by the moſt ardent zeal for his honour which is devoid of love, than by the moſt painful, toilſome ſacrifices, by the moſt ſhining exploits, the principle and ſcope whereof is not love; therefore thou glorifieſt not God, haſt no right to pretend to his approbation, thou, who rigorouſly judgeſt and cenſureſt thy brother, damneſt the erroneous and weak, the greater part of mankind, who are not chriſtians, arbitrarily debarreſt them acceſs to the mercy-ſeat of God, and all the joys of heaven, deſpiſeſt thy ſtumbling and miſtaken fellow-creatures, makeſt them the objects of thy deriſion and leaveſt them helpleſs and forlorn; therefore haſt thou every thing to fear from God, o man, if thou haſt no love abiding in

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thy heart, if thou envieſt, hateſt, injureſt thy brother, be he whom he will and denominated how he may, rejoiceſt in his misfortune and grudgeſt him his ſucceſs and his endowments; if thou art inſenſible to the wretched and diſtreſſed, art implacable to ſuch as have treſpaſſed againſt thee, or generally indifferent to all that relates to thy brethren of mankind, yes, ſo long as this continues to be thy temper and conduct, thou haſt everything to dread from God, not as though he were vindictive, not as if he had pleaſure in thy miſery, but becauſe he is love, and therefore can have no fellowſhip with thee, the loveleſs man, and cannot poſſibly communicate to thee his felicity, which conſiſts in the completeſt exercife of love.

IX. God is love: therefore he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him; therefore love is the bond, the gentle, holy bond, of union with the deity, rendering us ſuſceptible of his influence and the communication of his energies and joys; therefore there is no nearer, ſurer way to have communion with the ſupreme being, than love, true, chriſtian, active, unwearied love to all mankind; therefore the image of God, our heavenly father, is the more reſplendent in us, and we are the more capable and worthy of the honour of being the ſubſtitutes of his ſon Jeſus upon earth, the more we poſſeſs and practiſe love; therefore there is not any more infallible ſign that we are children of God, followers of Jeſus and heirs of eternal glory, than the being

entirely animated by the ſpirit of love. Have we any ambition then to be well-pleaſing unto God, my dear friends, to make nearer approaches to him, to grow in his likeneſs and ſo to become partakers in his divine nature, are we ambitious of ſecuring his favour and the felicity of heaven, oh let us open every avenue of our hearts to love, let love, pure, generous, active love be the ſoul of all our thoughts and judgments, the governing principle of all our words and works. Whatever we do or decline doing, let us do or forbear to do with love and from love, from love to God and to all mankind, with a heart rejoicing in all good, benevolent to all our brethren, and unabatedly ſtriving to increaſe the ſatisfactions of others and as far as poſſible to promote their happineſs. Whoſo does this is a follower of God, is his friend, his confidant, the aſſociate in his felicity!

X. God is love: therefore thou mayeſt calmly reſign thyſelf and thy fates to him, mayeſt expect pure good, all good from him, o thou, who knoweſt God, loveſt him as thy father, and makeſt it thy principal endeavour to pleaſe him; therefore thou needeſt not anxiouſly take thought for the future, thou mayeſt caſt all thy cares on him, the Allwiſe and Allbountiful, and be fully aſſured that he will provide for thee. Thou repoſeſt in the arms of love, ſupreme, moſt efficacious, unalterable love, which ſupports thee, which provides for thee, which determines and conducts thy deſtinies, which cannot intend and effectuate otherwiſe than thy good. What

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the divinity who is love, denies thee, muſt certainly be pernicious; what he gives thee muſt certainly be beneficial; the way which he calls thee to go, muſt certainly be the beſt which thou at preſent canſt go. Reſign thyſelf to him then with filial confidence, do promptly what he orders thee to do, ſuffer reſolutely what he inflicts on thee to ſuffer, walk boldly along the path which he points out to thee; it will certainly lead thee right, will lead thee to felicity, and ſooner or later thou wilt clearly perceive that he has enjoined thee no duty, committed to thee no affairs, brought on thee no affliction, granted thee no ſatisfaction, allowed thee to take no ſtep, that was not calculated to bring thee nearer to that object.

XI. God is love: therefore thou mayeſt undauntedly follow even his ſummons to death, as the ſummons to a better, a ſuperior life, boldly dare the darkneſs which it ſpreads before thee, not doubting that it will conduct thee to bright, eternal, bliſsful day. He, the God of love, will not, cannot annihilate thee, will certainly not cauſe thee to go backwards, but forwards, not deprive thee together with thy exiſtence of all perfection, but lead it for ever nearer to completion! His love is unchangeable, is eternal, its efficacy is never diminiſhed. How could it ſuffer the deſtruction of a being ſuſceptible of happineſs, a being that can love both God and man, and in the enjoyment of that love be bleſſed? No, neither death nor the grave can defeat its beneficent deſigns, for he is almighty love; love which can

never fail of its ends! Impoſſible! thee for whom he has already done and is ſtill doing ſo much, ſo inexpreſſibly much; thee, whom he has endowed with ſuch great capacities, thee, whom he ſo carefully leads to wiſdom and exerciſes in virtue; thee, whom he has inſpired with ſuch an ardent appetence after nearer participation of deity; thee, for whom he gave his ſon to die upon the croſs: impoſſible that he can abandon thee to the dominion of death and the grave, or ceaſe to protect and provide for thee, when thou art moſt in need of his protection and providence! No, even then will he glorify himſelf in thee as the God of love, will infuſe hope and confidence into thy heart, refreſh and ſtrengthen thee by the aſſurance of his parental tenderneſs, and lead thee through death to the complete, undiſturbed enjoyment of all the bleſſings and felicities which his love has prepared for thee in a better world!

So exuberant in important, conſolatory conſequences is the truth: God is love! What a ſublime and bliſsful idea! If it illuminate the underſtanding with its light and pervade the heart with its warmth, what cannot, what muſt it not perform! The wicked are rendered good, the good ſtill better, both are happy, and become capable of a progreſſively purer felicity. Oh let us then, my dear friends, let us deeply impreſs this moſt ſoothing, moſt fruitful, moſt bliſsful of all truths upon our hearts, never forget it, never doubt of it, never think of it without inward emotion and joy! Oh let us do ſo even now

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at the table of our lord, where all exclaims to us in accents diſtinct and loud: God is love, and that as ſurely as thou eateſt of that bread and drinkeſt of that cup, for from love he ſent his ſon to thee, and for thee delivered him up to death! That Jeſus, whoſe memorial thou here ſolemnizeſt, is the expreſs image of his father — is viſible, divine, incarnate love. He loved thee even unto death, loved thee more than his life, and loves thee ſtill, and will love thee to all eternity. Yes, this moſt conſoling, moſt bliſsful of all truths, the truth that God is love, ſhould be the leading principle of all our thoughts and judgments; animate all our words and works, ſolve every difficulty in nature and religion, or quiet our minds about it, diffuſe light and conſolation over all the paths of life, ſweetening and dignifying every pleaſure, and converting every affliction into a benefit! It ſhould inſtruct us to live righteouſly and cheerfully and to die contented and happy! And as often as we experimentally feel its ſaving influence, we will glory in chriſtianity; chriſtianity, which taught us this firſt, grand truth, has put it in the cleareſt point of view and beyond all doubt, and would moſt aſſuredly even if it had taught us nothing elſe, have been the moſt ineſtimable boon of the divine bounty, the moſt exuberant, inexhauſtible ſource of truth and felicity! Yes, happy and eternally happy for us, that we are chriſtians, for now we know him, the Faithful and True, and know and believe and experience, that he is love!

Communion.

SERMON XXXIV.

The true worſhipping of God.

GOD, we are here met together, to be occupied in thy worſhip and in thy ſervice. What a noble, what a bliſsful employment! How it elevates our ſoul! How it enlarges and gladdens our heart, to draw nigh unto thee, the ſupreme, all-perfect mind, thee, our creator and father, to know and experience our inward, ſtrict alliance with thee! Oh might we but conſtantly honour thee with our hearts as well as with our words and geſtures, approach thee conſtantly with filial love and confidence, adore thee conſtantly in ſpirit and in truth, and in the ſentiment of thy nearer preſence enjoy the invigoration and the felicity, which it never fails to procure thy ſincere and upright worſhippers! Oh might but our whole lives be devoted to thy worſhip and to thy ſervice! Might all that we think and ſpeak and do, atteſt that reverence, that love, that obedience, that truſt and confidence which we for ever owe thee! Might all who ſhould happen to know our diſpoſitions and to ſee our works, be thereby incited and ſtimulated to glorify thee, our father in heaven! Are not all the moments of our lives, are not all the capacities, all the endowments, all the faculties that we have, all the ſatisfactions that we enjoy,

enjoy, thy gift, thy property! Are and continue we not at all times and in all places thy creatures, thy children, thy ſubjects! Doſt thou ceaſe at any time and in any place to watch over us and to provide for us, to bleſs us and to do us good! Oh might then our zeal and our efforts to pleaſe thee and to do thy will, be as uniform, as conſtant, as unwearied! Might ever increaſing truth and order and harmony reign in all our ſentiments, and between all the parts of our conduct! Yes, ſuch is now our wiſh from the bottom of our hearts. Aſſiſt us mightily by thy grace and heavenly benediction, o God of our ſalvation and hope, in doing that which the accompliſhment of this pious wiſh demands. Bleſs in that view our reflections on thoſe doctrines of religion that are now to be delivered to us. Let their effulgence diſpel our errors, and lead us on the path of chriſtian perfection. Graciouſly hear theſe our requeſts, preſented to thy divine majeſty by votaries of thy ſon Jeſus, in whoſe name we farther addreſs thee, ſaying: Our father, &c.

JAMES i. 27.

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the father is this, to viſit the fatherleſs and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himſelf unſpotted from the world.

EVERY one accounts it his duty to worſhip God and to ſerve him. That is, every man who is not deſtitute of all knowledge of God and of all belief

lief in him; every one who conceives of the deity as a being, that ſtands in certain relations to the viſible world, and particularly towards mankind, that he is their creator, their preſerver, their ſovereign, their judge, on whoſe will their lives and their happineſs depend. Nobody moreover abſolutely refuſes to fulfil this duty of the worſhip and the ſervice of God. Every one is prompt to do or to omit in this reſpect ſomething, now more, now leſs, now this, now ſomewhat elſe. Many people put themſelves to great expenſe of money, of time, of exertion in this worſhip and in this ſervice of God, impoſe on themſelves many inconvenient reſtraints, preſcribe themſelves auſtere rules and practices, ſacrifice ſome pleaſures and advantages, neglect perhaps important affairs on that account, and poſtpone other no leſs ſacred or even more ſacred duties. Little doubt however as the generality of mankind entertain of their obligation to worſhip God and to ſerve him, and ready as they are for the moſt part in complying with it, yet comparatively but few fulfil this duty in a reaſonable manner, agreeable to God and ſalutary to themſelves, becauſe but few form juſt conceptions of it, becauſe the generality confine the worſhip and the ſervice of God to certain outward ſolemn acts, conſidering them as matters that belong merely to particular times and places, and entirely detached from the general life and conduct of mankind. Let us endeavour to rectify this opinion, my

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pious hearers, and that with the greater care, ſince the influence of any miſtake on this head is ſo extremely injurious to our virtue and happineſs. What is therefore to worſhip God and to ſerve him? How can, how ſhould this be our daily, our unceaſing occupation? Wherein conſiſts the perpetual divine worſhip, the perpetual divine ſervice of the chriſtian? To the anſwering of theſe queſtions I have devoted my preſent diſcourſe; and the anſwering of them will ſhew us how true and how important the declaration of the apoſtle in our text is: the proper and acceptable divine ſervice is this, to aſſiſt widows and orphans in their diſtreſs, and to keep unſpotted from the world, or conſiſts in leading a beneficent, harmleſs, virtuous life.

Of this we are perfectly ſure, my pious hearers, that we cannot ſerve God, as we ſerve one another. We mutually ſerve each other, by aſſiſting and relieving one another, bearing one another's burdens, eaſing one another in our buſineſſes or our troubles, by lending or imparting to one another our credit, our property, our ſagacity, our abilities, by working and providing for others, bearing and ſuffering for others, by promoting the perfection and happineſs of one another. But now, o man, what canſt, what wouldſt thou do, in order to aſſiſt the Almighty? Who hath directed the ſpirit of the Lord, or being his counſellor hath taught him? With whom took he counſel, and who inſtructed him, brought

brought him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and ſhewed to him the way of underſtanding? What wouldſt, what canſt thou do, o man, to make the ſupremely perfect ſtill more perfect, him who is alone and unalterably happy, ſtill more happy? What wouldſt, what canſt thou give him, that is not his, that he did not firſt give thee? Is not every beaſt of the foreſt, are not the fowls of the mountains, and the cattle upon a thouſand hills, whence thou mighteſt be induced to bring him an offering, already his? Is not the earth, are not all the fruits which it produces and treaſure it contains, his? Of whom does he need any thing, the All-ſufficient? Dwells he, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, in temples made with hands? Does he, who gave to all men life and breath and everything, want the ſervice and the attendance of man? And can a man, as it is ſaid in the book of Job, be profitable unto God, as he that is wiſe may be profitable unto himſelf? Is it any gain to the Almighty, that thou art righteous, that thou makeſt thy ways perfect? If thou ſinneſt, what doſt thou againſt him? If thou be righteous, what giveſt thou him? What receiveth he therefrom at thy hand?

Not leſs certain however is it, my pious hearers, that to worſhip God and pay him due ſervice, does not imply, cannot merely conſiſt in, what is ſo called in regard to the great and powerful of the earth. Theſe

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we are wont to approach with apparent reverence and devotion, bow ourſelves before them, or in their preſence fall proſtrate to the ground, extol their grandeur, their authority, their wiſdom, their bounty, flatter their darling propenſities and paſſions, praiſe their real or ſuppoſed merits, ſhew them outward marks of ſubmiſſion and of zeal for their intereſts, eſteem ourſelves, in appearance at leaſt, honoured by their commands, cheered by their gracious ſmiles, rewarded by their obliging words, promiſe them obedience and fidelity, commend ourſelves to their patronage and their graces; and afterwards commonly do juſt what either we are abſolutely forced to do, or what we can do without much trouble or inconvenience, without caring any farther about their deſires, the promotion of their views, their perſonal intereſts or thoſe of their dependants, without being governed or reſtrained by anything of all this in the reſt of our ordinary carriage. With ſuch ſervice muſt indeed the gods of the earth in general be content, for the intrinſic, the remote, what enſues in their abſence, is for the moſt part concealed from them, is ſometimes even indifferent to them. In the mean time theſe marks of honour flatter their pride, cauſe them to feel their ſuperiority over their fellow-creatures, and remind them of the various means and implements they have at command for procuring actual ſervices, for following their inclinations, executing their projects, and cauſing their orders to be obeyed. — —

But the God of heaven, the Omniſcient, the Omnipreſent, the trier of the heart and the reins, who ſees in ſecret, to whom the night is as light as the day, ſhould, can, will he be ſatisfied with this? Can and will he ſuffer himſelf to be impoſed upon, as we impoſe upon one another? Is that forſooth the worſhiping, is that the ſerving of God, the ſerving of God in ſpirit and in truth, o man, if at ſtated times thou appeareſt in his temple, if thou there humbleſt thyſelf before him, who dwelleth in heaven, and filleth all with his preſence, if thou there repeat certain forms of prayer, chant certain hymns of praiſe, obſerve certain rites, attend certain ſolemnities, and then in all the reſt of thy life, at other times and other places, but ſeldom thinkeſt on him, but ſeldom concerneſt thyſelf about his will and governeſt thyſelf by it, but ſeldom endeavoureſt to pleaſe him, but ſeldom doſt that which he commands thee to do, but ſeldom ſtriveſt to promote his deſigns on earth? Is this indeed to glorify God with our body and with our ſoul? Is this to conſecrate our whole life to him? Is this to do all, whatever we do, to the honour and glory of God? — Certainly God requires of thee that public homage, thoſe outward tokens of thy devout feelings and diſpoſitions, yet not on his account, but for thy own ſake and that of thy brethren, not as an end, but as means to higher ends, not as the eſſentials of his worſhip and his ſervice, but as direction and excitement and impulſe to it.

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No, my pious hearers, to worſhip God, implies, to have a deep ſenſe of who God is, and in what relations we ſtand towards him, to keep this ſenſe always lively and active, and conſtantly to think, ſpeak and act in conformity with it. Therefore, to be ſenſible how far God is exalted above us, how entirely we depend on him, and what unlimited obedience, what complete ſubmiſſion we owe him; to be ſenſible that God is our creator, our father, our ſovereign, our judge, and to behave in ſuch manner towards him, as becomes his creatures, his children, his ſubjects; to be ſenſible that God is omniſcient, omnipreſent, conſummately wiſe and of great kindneſs, and therefore conſtantly to walk before his face, to live under a due ſenſe of his preſence, to dread everywhere and at all times the commiſſion of any evil before his all-piercing eyes, or to omit any good, to acknowledge his unerring wiſdom in all his ordinances and injunctions, to be ſatisfied with both the one and the other without reſerve and contradiction, and always with cheerful confidence to truſt in his mercy. To ſerve God, implies, to intend good and to do good, in every predicament to intend the beſt and to do the beſt, and to intend and do this from a principle of love and obedience to God; it implies to fulfil our duty, and readily and willingly and therefore to fulfil it, becauſe God has impoſed it on us; it implies, to promote as much as poſſible order, truth, virtue, happineſs in ourſelves and among mankind, to con-

tribute our due proportion to the beauty and perfection of the whole, to the general intereſts of the kingdom of God, and thus to think and act agreeably to his deſigns. This is to worſhip God in ſpirit and in truth, and to pay him a reaſonable, an acceptable ſervice. Whoever feels and acts thus, whoever is thus diſpoſed and thus lives, his whole life is one continued act of worſhip, one uninterrupted ſervice of God. — We will illuſtrate the ſubject by a cloſer application of it to a few particulars of our conduct.

I therefore ſerve God, I worſhip him by labouring at my own improvement and perfection, by aſſerting the dignity of my rational nature, and by ſo regulating my thoughts and life as befits a creature that is ſo far exalted above the beaſts of the field, that is of divine extraction. I have, (thus flow my thoughts on ſuch occaſions,) I have capacities and powers of various kinds, and of ſuperior excellence. Theſe I did not confer upon myſelf, they are God's, originate from him, and are by him preſerved. My body and my ſoul are his property, and both ſhould glorify him, their creator and preſerver. He beſtowed them both upon me for the furtherance of my own happineſs and that of all my ſpecies. It cannot therefore poſſibly be of equal import to him, whether I enervate and deſtroy my body and my ſoul by folly and vice, or by wiſdom and virtue preſerve and perfect them; whether I make a good or ill uſe of my capacities and powers; whether

whether I degrade myſelf to a level with the brute creation, or elevate myſelf to ſuperior beings and approach to deity. No, I ſhould, I will be and do and uſe, all that through God I am and can do, whatever I have received from him, to the ends for which he has beſtowed it on me. For this is agreeable to my creator and father in heaven, this is in purſuance of his will and his purpoſes. If I exerciſe my underſtanding in rational meditation, ſtore my memory with uſeful knowledge, direct my affections to the beſt, the worthieſt objects, and employ all my faculties in acts of juſtice and beneficence, if I unabatedly purſue a progreſſive improvement in intellect and virtue, an increaſing participation in the divine nature, and do this becauſe I perceive and feel how highly God has favoured me, and how much he has entruſted to me: I thus ſerve him, I thus worſhip him in the beſt manner, the way moſt agreeable to him, I thus glorify him in my body and in my ſoul, ſince I uſe them according to his will and to his glory. Thus my body and my ſoul evince the perfection of their author. Thus I maintain the dignity of my celeſtial origin, the honour of being formed in the ſimilitude of God, and my underſtanding is a more or leſs effulgent beam of his unbounded intellect, my inclination a more or leſs perfect reflection of his conſummate wiſdom and benignity, my public uſefulneſs a livelier or fainter imitation of his inceſſant, all-involving and all-animating efficacy. Thus muſt, thus will all, who ob-

ſerve me preſſing forward in my progreſs to perfection, and ſee my good works, glorify our father in heaven.

To proceed, I ſerve God, I worſhip him, if I worthily occupy the poſt which I fill in the world among mankind, if I faithfully diſcharge the duties of my ſtation, of my office, of my vocation, and that from a principle of obedience to God and a ſtedfaſt regard to his will. God, (thus thinks the good man, whoſe whole courſe of life is one continued act of divine worſhip,) God, who orders, conducts and governs all things, has aſſigned me this poſt in his empire, placed me in this ſituation, appointed me to this office. He determines, that in this and not in another place, in this and not in another method, in this and not in another circle, I ſhall co-operate to the good of the whole. He ſurveys all, comprehends all, whether in time or ſpace, and beſt knows, how far and for what purpoſes every one of his creatures is fit, what ſhould be attempted and achieved by each, and how by all, the general order, the higheſt perfection and happineſs ſhould be maintained and advanced. Be my ſituation in the world therefore ever ſo humble, my occupations ever ſo difficult and laborious, their ſucceſs ever ſo uncertain and trifling, yet I am ſtanding there, I am working there, where God the Allwiſe wills that I ſhould ſtand and work, I do that which he wills that I ſhould do. I am occupied in his ſervice, and to ſerve him is always honour and felicity, be it where and where-

by it may. Thus therefore may the prince and the ſubject, the officer of ſtate and the day-labourer, the learned and the unlearned, thus may the merchant, the mechanic, the artiſt, the huſbandman, the father, the mother of a family, thus may every individual, by the proſecution of his ordinary affairs, ſerve God and worſhip him continually, if every individual in every place at all times does that, which according to his ſtation and calling he can and ought to do, and conſiders all this as the taſk which God has committed to him here on earth to finiſh. For, by ſo thinking and acting, I revere the inſtitutions and regulations which God has eſtabliſhed among mankind, in ſo doing I feel and acknowledge his wiſdom and his kindneſs in all that he diſpoſes and enjoins, and act always conſiſtently with this knowledge and this perception. I thus ſubmit my will entirely to the will of God, allow myſelf to be guided and governed by him in all things, look to him in all, and act and work as it were upon the ſame plan by which God acts, and am, in the language of ſcripture, a worker together with him.

I ſerve thirdly God, I worſhip him, if without regard to the particular duties of my ſtation and calling, from a good heart and in good views I ſerve my brethren and promote their true intereſts according to my means, if, as it is ſaid in our text, I readily aſſiſt and relieve the widow and the orphan, and in general, the indigent and diſtreſſed, and that from a principle of love and obedience to

God. Here, (ſays the chriſtian to himſelf, whoſe life is one continued act of divine worſhip,) here are children of my heavenly father, ſighing beneath the weight of misfortune, deploring their painful ſeparation from the partner of their lives, lamenting ſome heavy loſs, I will hie me thither and comfort them, will at leaſt weep with them, and as much as poſſible alleviate their ſufferings by the intereſt I take in them: there are others, who are ſtruggling with want and miſery, anxiouſly lifting up their ſuppliant hands to heaven for ſuccour, I will run and adminiſter to their relief as far as I am able, in hopes of being the happy inſtrument by which God anſwers their prayers and affords them the wiſhed for aid. Here are forlorn and helpleſs objects, bereaved of their ſtay, their guardian, their protector, and expoſed to the artifices of ſeduction as well as to the violence of the wicked, I will take up their cauſe, or recommend them to the patronage and protection of ſome perſon of more weight and conſequence than I can pretend to, and thus fortify them in their truſt in that God who is a father to the fatherleſs and defendeth the cauſe of the widow: there are ſome that are gone aſtray, who have miſtaken the right path, and have ſtruck into devious turnings and intricacies, I will go and in a friendly manner ſhew them the error of their ways, adminiſter to them brotherly correction, endeavour to lead them back to the paths of truth and happineſs, to God, their father. Both the one and the other

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are creatures and children of God, all of them my brothers and ſiſters, and if I eſteem and love them as ſuch, if as ſuch I ſerve and aſſiſt them, I honour the creator and father both of them and me, I do that which he bids me do, as it were in his ſtead and in his name, I employ my faculties, my endowments, my intereſt, my underſtanding, my ſympathiſing, ſentimental heart, to the ends for which he beſtowed them on me, I am an inſtrument in his hand, whereby he aſſiſts and does good to ſome of his children, I furniſh them with the motive and opportunity to glorify our father in heaven and to rejoice in his providential care. And may we not affirm this to be the nobleſt way of worſhipping God, the pureſt and trueſt method of ſerving him?

To conclude, I ſerve God, I worſhip him, if I regard, accept, enjoy, ſuffer, do every thing, good and evil, in its dependence on God, aſcend through all to him, through all make nearer approaches to him. Now I behold the magnificent univerſe of God, his great and glorious works in heaven and on earth, and admire the wiſdom, the power, the benignity of their author: then I enjoy the various refreſhing and ſtrengthening fruits of the earth, the no leſs various products of human induſtry, of human art and ingenuity, the elegances and accommodations of life, and rejoice in him who impregnates the earth by his energy, and adorns it by his bleſſing, who gave underſtanding and induſtry to man, and made the preſent life ſo fertile in ſources of ſatisfaction and plea-

ſure. Now I do that which my office and vocation call me to do, and do it with facility and ſucceſs, engage in uſeful occupations, conquer the difficulties connected with them, reap the hoped for fruits from them, and magnify him, who gave and preſerved to me the abilities for them, and has crowned my endeavours with ſucceſs: then I meet with other obſtacles, which I am not able to overcome, am forced to abandon my deſigns, and to ſee my beſt plans defeated, and even then adore the decrees of him on whom the completion of every purpoſe depends, and without whoſe favour no enterpriſe however good can proſper. Now I ſuffer, and ſay to myſelf, it is thy father in heaven, from whom this affliction proceeds, and he lays no burden upon thee which thou art unable to bear, and the endurance whereof is not ſalutary to thee: then I am revived, conſoled, pacified in my ſufferings, liberated from them, and recogniſe and feel in all this the gracious preſence, the parental care and providential relief of my God. Can I however entertain ſuch ideas and ſentiments, can I do all this, without worſhipping God, without holding him for what he is, without forming juſt and honourable conceptions of him and of his government, without being faithful to my convictions, and allowing them their proper influence over my conduct?

And this, my pious hearers, is the continual divine worſhip, the continual divine ſervice of the chriſtian! Thus does he make it his daily, his perpetual

petual occupation! Rely not therefore, o man, on that which is vulgarly and excluſively called the worſhip and ſervice of God, deem it not the eſſentials of thy duty, the ſum and ſubſtance of thy godlineſs, detach not that duty from the reſt of thy deportment, confine it not to certain times and places, think not that it is obligatory on thee in any one moment of thy life leſs than in any other, and beware of ſuppoſing anything to be the true worſhipping of God, in which thy heart has no concern, and which has no influence on thy conduct. No, God cannot, like man, be ſatisfied with mere outwards actions, with humble geſtures, with downcaſt eyes, with complimentary and flattering words, becauſe to him all hearts are open, he ſees the inſide as well as the outſide, what is done in ſecret as well as what paſſes in the face of day, and all externals that are at variance with the internals, can in his eyes, not only have no worth at all, it muſt be really culpable, ſince it implies an abnegation or a forgetfulneſs of his abſolute perfection, and is vile hypocriſy. No, God looks at the heart, and ſincerity alone is agreeable to him. For the ſame reaſon likewiſe God cannot be ſatisfied with ſingle, truly good, but tranſient, ſentiments and actions, but muſt judge the man according to his ruling diſpoſitions and by the whole tenour of his conduct, becauſe to him the whole is always preſent, becauſe he loves order and harmony above all things, becauſe he would have us and our brethren by us to be good and happy, not

merely in ſome moments and in certain particulars, but entirely and for ever.

Wouldſt thou therefore, o man, o chriſtian, worſhip God and ſerve him ſo as to meet with his acceptance and good pleaſure, conſiſtently with thy nature, thy appointment, thy happineſs; ſet the Lord always before thee, let the idea of God be never abſent from thy mind, never be indifferent, but always important, always dear, always preſent to thee, allow it always to have its natural tendency to diffuſe light into thy underſtanding, and order and peace and contentment into thy heart. Aſcend frequently in ſpirit to thy creator and father, and do ſo in thy amuſements as well as thy buſineſs, in the tumult of ſocial as in the quiet of domeſtic or retired life. The avidity to pleaſe God and to do his will, to reſemble him more and more, and ſo to become more capable of communion with him, ſhould be to thee a vivifying principle at all times and in all places, the moving ſpring of thy whole behaviour. Thy duty ſhould be always ſacred and inviolable to thee, and the performance of it the reſult of love and gratitude to thy heavenly father, the effect of that devout obedience and complete reſignation, with which thou art attached to him. To ſuccour the widow and the orphan in their diſtreſs, and to keep thyſelf unſpotted from the world; to do good to thy brethren, to mitigate their ſufferings and deſolation, and to increaſe their fund of happineſs, and withal to lead a life of innocence, free from the prevailing follies and vices,

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and marked by the practice of univerſal virtue: be that thy joy, thy glory, the aim of thy endeavours. So wilt thou honour God, by reſpecting and honouring thy own nature, and employing thy capacities and powers agreeably to the will and the intentions of their author. So wilt thou ſerve God, by ſerving his creatures and children, and proſecuting his work on earth. So wilt thou, according to the precept of the apoſtle, neither eat nor drink, nor do any thing elſe that does not tend to the glory of God. And ſo will the worſhip and the ſervice of God be, not a burden, but a ſatisfaction and pleaſure to thee; not a conſtraint upon thee, but a neceſſary and refreſhment of life; not a moleſtation and interruption of thy pleaſure, but the recreation and multiplication of it. Thus will thy affections never lead different ways, thy duties never claſh together, thy love of God and man will as it were blend and coaleſce, and thy temper and frame of life will be in perfect conſiſtence. Thus wilt thou be ever becoming more able and fit to worſhip God more worthily hereafter, to ſerve him more purely and indefatigably, and to execute greater matters in his ſervice, and to enjoy ſuperior felicities, than is poſſible for thee to do at preſent in this ſtate of weakneſs and limitation.

SERMON XXXV.

How we ſhould excite the Love of God in our Hearts, and reduce it to a Principle of Action.

GOD, that we not only daily and hourly receive ſo many undeniable proofs of thy parental affection for us, but that we can alſo rejoice in thee as our father, and make thee as thy children returns of love: this is the grand prerogative of our nature, the pureſt and moſt exuberant ſource of our felicity. Even the innumerable orders of inferior beings that ſurround us, are preſerved, nouriſhed and ſatisfied with good by thee, our univerſal creator and father; but, though endued with life and ſenſe, through the imperfection of their make, they can neither diſcern thy power which upholds, thy preſence which animates, nor thy kind and gracious influence, that cheers and comforts their frame. But thou haſt implanted a ſpirit in man, to which thy almighty inſpiration has given ſuperior meaſures of underſtanding; he alone of all the creatures of the earth, can lift his heart to thee, he alone in the enjoyment of thy bounties

bounties can feel thy parental tenderneſs and love, and thus exalt and refine his taſte, for all that he beholds and enjoys of beautiful and good. He alone has the capacity of knowing the fount from whence his joys and comforts flow, and knows and rejoices that this fount is eternal and inexhauſtible. God, what vaſt inferences ſpontaneouſly follow from this capacity in us men of knowing and loving thee! And what may we not hope and expect from it in all future times! How ſecurely it places us out of all dread of annihilation, or of retrogreſſion on the ſcale of things! What promiſes it holds out to us of eternal, inceſſant approximation to thee and to perfection! Oh may our hearts be ſoft and yielding to every impreſſion of thee, to the ſenſe of thy parental love, and be thoroughly pervaded by the moſt grateful and efficacious return of love! Oh may the thought of thee, our wiſeſt, kindeſt, moſt liberal father, be ever preſent to our minds, ever dear to our hearts, and always connected with that delight and bliſs, which it never fails to procure to the wiſeſt and beſt of thy children and worſhippers! May even the conſiderations in which we are now about to engage be bleſſed to that end! Teach us to know and feel how greatly the love of thee invigorates, dignifies and bleſſes mankind, and grant that we may all enter upon that path, and ſtedfaſtly purſue it, by which we attain to theſe privileges and to this felicity. Hear us in theſe our humble ſupplications which we offer

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up unto thee with filial confidence as the votaries of Jeſus, and continue to pray unto thee for ourſelves and for all mankind in his name and in his own peculiar words. Our father, &c.

MATTHEW xxii. 37.

Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind.

WE may repreſent to ourſelves, my pious hearers, the love of God partly as a duty, partly as the privilege and felicity of man. If the holy ſcriptures inculcate it upon us as a duty, they principally intend by it the obedience that we owe to God, that excluſive worſhip which we alone can pay him, and the prompt and cheerful performance of it. It is abſolutely our bounden duty; and that in the ſtricteſt and moſt proper ſignification of the term. God is our creator and ſovereign: we are his creatures and ſubjects. What then can abſolve us from the moſt unlimited obedience to him? He is infinitely exalted above us, and all that is without him: he is the only potentate, the lord of all dominion, the conſummately perfect, the matchleſs being. Can we worthily enough worſhip him; and who deſerves to be worſhipped like him? All his commands are juſt and holy, and their obſervance is every way promotive of our happineſs. What arguments, what motives, for keeping them without heſitation, with promptitude

tude and joy? In this ſenſe to love God is abſolutely our duty, the perpetual duty of man.

If however we conſider it as the privilege and felicity of thoſe whom it animates as a vivifying principle, it cannot properly be demanded of us; it is not ſo much a poſitive duty impoſed on us by the law, and the tranſgreſſion whereof is puniſhed by the legiſlator, as rather the motive and energy to every duty, and a reward for the accompliſhment of it. It is the natural conſequence of a ſound frame and temper of mind in regard to God and our relations towards him; the reſult of thoſe juſt and adequate conceptions we form of him, or at leaſt ſuch as are honourable to the divine nature and approaching towards the truth, and the devout emotions that ariſe from them. This love of God conſiſts principally in the complacency, in the pleaſure and ſatisfaction with which every thought of him, every elevation of the heart to him, every enjoyment of his bounties, every inward and outward act of worſhip, of adoration, of ſubmiſſion, of acquieſcence, of obedience, that we yield him, is connected in the ſoul of the devout. And this love towards God is the higheſt privilege, is the pureſt felicity of man. A privilege, a felicity, my dear friends, that far, far tranſcends whatever elſe may bear that name among mankind. A privilege, a felicity that merits our moſt zealous and unabated endeavours, endeavours that at the ſame time tend to the acquirement of all beſides that can truly honour and bleſs us. Yes, when this love to-

wards God has once got poſſeſſion of our heart; when it has become the leading idea, the ruling ſentiment within; what burden of life will not ſeem light to us, what duty not be pleaſant? To what degree of human virtue and happineſs may we not then attain! But this privilege muſt be acquired, this felicity muſt be ſought, ſought with unremitted ardour, if we would have it for our portion. However natural the love of what is amiable may be to our heart: yet its ſenſibility to it ſhould be cultivated, refined, improved by reflection and practice; it ſhould be rendered greater, continually more capable of nobler emotions. And thus it is likewiſe with that love towards God of which we are ſpeaking. It is not a ſpontaneous growth within us, it is and effectuates not without our exertions that within us, which it may and ought properly to be and effectuate within us. This ſpark of celeſtial fire requires to be carefully fanned and nouriſhed, in order that it may not go out. And for your conduct herein, my pious hearers, I am deſirous at preſent to give you a few directions. Let us therefore conſider, how and by what means we ſhould awaken in our hearts this love towards God, and exerciſe ourſelves therein.

Wouldſt thou love God, wouldſt thou learn to think of him with inward delight and to make him thy conſolation and joy, o man: learn to know him continually better. The greater progreſs thou makeſt in the knowledge of him: the more reaſons thou wilt

wilt find to love him, to rejoice in him, in all that thou art able to apprehend and to know of him; the more venerable and amiable properties wilt thou diſcover in him. Not always, my pious hearers, is a clearer and completer knowledge of the object that invites our love, the ſureſt means of nouriſhing and confirming it. But too often does this knowledge in regard to ſenſible, terreſtrial objects produce the quite contrary effect. The firſt view of them pleaſes, their outward figure is alluring, their poſſeſſion and enjoyment promiſe us laſting benefit, pure ſatisfaction. The dazzling glare that ſurrounds them conceals their imperfections and defects, and allows us to expect from them nothing but contentment and delight. But as we become more acquainted with them; as the charm of novelty wears off; as by the uſe of them we learn to view them on ſeveral ſides: we find ourſelves cheated in our expectations, diſcover them to be leſs good, leſs beautiful; the fervour of our love is extinct, and indifference and coldneſs, often diſguſt and averſion ſucceed. How many perſons and things, how many poſſeſſions, and how many ſatisfactions and pleaſures, ſoothe and gratify us only ſo long as we behold them at a diſtance, in a glimmering light, and appreciate them more from faint and obſcure perceptions, than from clear and perſpicuous ideas! This is preciſely the reaſon why mankind are ſo frequently tormented, one moment by vacuity, and the next by ſatiety, why they are ſo fickle in their affections and purſuits, why we

we ſo often hear them complain: all, all is vanity, and vexation of ſpirit. — This however, my dear friends, is not the caſe with the love to God, the eternal, the immutable, the inexhauſtible original fount of all that is great and beautiful and good. Indeed we never ſhall, nor can thoroughly know him, the Infinite, never be able to behold the full blaze of his glory without a veil. But the nearer we approach to him, the Unattainable; the juſter and clearer the conceptions we form of him, the Supremely-perfect; the more familiar we become with him; the more frequently we aſcend in mind and heart to him, the father of ſpirits, and the more converſe and fellowſhip we have with him: the more prolific in joy and bliſs will the ſentiment of him and the intercourſe with him be to us; the more grounds and motives ſhall we have to rejoice in him and to love him with all our hearts. Wouldſt thou be partaker of this happineſs, o man, content not thyſelf with the obſcure, confuſed, falſe, miſtaken notions of the deity ſo current among mankind. Endeavour to introduce into them more light, more truth, more certainty, more life. Purge them as much as poſſible from all that is low, impaſſioned, human, from all weak and trivial mixtures. Seek after God, and ſtudy to know him as the centre and ſource of all truth, of all beauty, of all perfection. To this purpoſe attend to the voice of his revelations in nature and in ſcripture. Search out every trace of his power and majeſty, his wiſdom and goodneſs

goodneſs in each of his creatures, and likewiſe in thy own mind and heart, and learn to know the cauſe from its effects, the workman from his work. Never wilt thou be in want of matter for the enlargement, the rectification, the elevation of thy ideas concerning this moſt exalted being; never wilt thou drain the ſources of thy knowledge of him, never exhauſt the motives of thy affection for him. Every ray of light that in this reſpect illumes thy mind, will at the ſame time ſoothe and cheer thy heart. Each diſcovery of wiſdom and goodneſs will be neceſſarily attended with additional love; which at the ſame time admits of enlargement, according as our powers ſhall continue to expand through all the ſucceſſive periods of eternal exiſtence.

Wouldſt thou, farther, love God, wouldſt thou learn to think of him with inward delight and rejoice in him always, o man; ſtudy to know him particularly as the father, the kindeſt, the tendereſt father of men, as a being that is pure, eſſential love, and accuſtom thyſelf to think of him chiefly in this relation, and agreeably with theſe attributes. Authority and majeſty, intelligence and might, excite reverence and admiration, and may eaſily overpower the human mind, conſcious of its own infirmity: but love, ſupremely wiſe, ſupremely efficacious, inexhauſtible, unwearied love, unalterable benevolence and unceaſing beneficence enlarge and exalt our ſoul, and inſpire it with confidence, joy, reciprocation of love. And the more intelligent and powerful that

love, the greater and more uncircumſcribed that benevolent and beneficent being: the more joy muſt the thought of him and the ſentiment of our connection with him beget in us. And that moſt affectionate, moſt beneficent being is God! This we gather from the idea of his ſovereign perfection. This nature and ſcripture diſtinctly teach us; this we are told by his ſon, his well-beloved, the expreſs image of his father. Attend to this declaration of nature and of religion, as well as of thy own underſtanding and heart, o man; aſſociate the grand, the bleſſed idea, God is love, he decrees and does and effects all good and conſtantly the beſt, aſſociate it intimately and indiſſolubly with the idea of God: ſo will that idea never be formidable, but conſtantly ſoothing and exhilarating to thy ſoul. And ſo will thy heart be ſoft and yielding to that impreſſion of the deity; never wilt thou find reaſon to chaſe away the thoughts of thy father in heaven, or to ſuppreſs them in thy mind, but everywhere and at all times will it be to thee no leſs welcome than joyful.

And in order to render thyſelf thoroughly familiar with theſe thoughts, the grandeſt and moſt bleſſed that can enter thy mind, learn thirdly to conſider, judge, do, forbear, ſuffer, enjoy all things, the ſmall as well as the great, the ſenſible as well as the intellectual, the evil as well as the good, all in reference to God and according to its analogies with him. Abſtractedly from its connection with the author and governor of the univerſe, with the father

of mankind, of all exiſtences, much, moſt of what falls under thy obſervation or comes to thy knowledge, muſt indeed aſtoniſh, confound, deject thee, much muſt diſturb and affright thee, much appear to thee extraordinary and incongruous, much grievous or utterly intolerable. But conſidered as the work, as the ordinance, as the diſpenſation, as the command, as the boon, as the chaſtening, as the judgment of a God, whoſe love is as infinite and boundleſs as his underſtanding, and who in his love enfolds heaven and earth, the ſmall and the great, the preſent and the future, all times and all worlds: then all appears to thee in quite a different light, in a far better and fairer form; all preſents itſelf to thee as prediſpoſal, as preparative, as nearer or remoter means conſpiring to attainment of the divine purpoſes, to the promotion of the greateſt poſſible perfection and happineſs. Then wilt thou perceive ſupreme, eternal love everywhere buſily occupied in behalf of its creatures, its offspring, in the ſtorm as in the ſunſhine, in the ſenſation of pain as in the enjoyment of pleaſure, in death as in life, in chaſtening and puniſhing, as in bleſſing and rewarding. Then wilt thou calmly reſign to it the ſolution of every enigma, the diſentanglement of every knotty point, the explication of every ſeeming difficulty, the reconcilement of every apparent contradiction; deem nothing evil to be abſolutely and in all reſpects evil, no affliction as unprofitable, no burden as inſupportable, no duty as a hardſhip, no privation as irrepa-

rable, no loſs as irretrievable, no exerciſe however laborious as vain and fruitleſs, no difficulty as inſuperable; and aſſuredly expect from it, from that ſupreme, eternal love which rules and governs all things, one continued train of good, and conſtantly the beſt both for thyſelf and for thy brethren.

Frequently conſider and weigh fourthly in the ſame deſign the multiplicity and the magnitude of the benefits which God has granted and is ſtill daily granting thee in nature and by religion both as a man and as a chriſtian. What art, what haſt thou, what canſt thou do, what doſt thou enjoy, o man, o chriſtian, that is not the free largeſs, the unmerited boon of thy gracious heavenly parent? What are all the beauties which nature ſpreads before thee, and all the ſatisfactions and delights ſhe offers to thee; what are all the accommodations and elegances of domeſtic and ſocial life; what are the glad feelings of exiſtence, of activity, of force that refreſh and cheer thee; what the agreeable ſenſations, procured thee by the exertion of thy intellectual and corporeal powers, the accompliſhment of thy duty, the completion of uſeful works and tranſactions, the reflections on God and the univerſe; what the proſpects they open to thee in futurity, and there allow thee to hope for inceſſant progreſs in perfection and everlaſting joys? What but the donations of the conſummate parental love of God towards us, his children; proofs and effects of his perpetual care for us; pledges and aſſurances of the greater benefits, the more

more refined felicities, we have to expect at the higher ſtages of our exiſtence from him, the Everlaſting? Art thou not conſcious of being everywhere ſurrounded by the moſt diverſified, moſt deſirable bounties of thy God and father as by the atmoſphere, as by the light of the ſun? And if thou be a chriſtian, and juſtly bear that title, how precious, how invaluable muſt the boon of chriſtianity be to thee! What influence muſt its doctrines, its precepts, its promiſes have daily and hourly on thy conceptions and judgments, on thy ſentiments and actions, on thy happineſs! Oh forget not all theſe benefits, forget not their multiplicity and their magnitude, enjoy them with conſciouſneſs, with conſideration, with regard to the ſource from whence they flow, enjoy them under a due ſenſe of thy weakneſs and indigence, and the infinite greatneſs of God, if thou wouldſt love him, thy benefactor, and delight thyſelf in him!

Seek out fifthly in the very evils that befall thyſelf and others, in what are called puniſhments and chaſtiſements, the traces of the parental love of the All-gracious, and learn to take evils, puniſhments and chaſtiſements for what they really are: for limitations, grounded in our nature, in our eſſence, in our condition, in our connection with the whole; for cautions againſt far greater evils, far more laſting pains; for incentives and motives to action, to the expanſion of our capacities, to the exertion and exerciſe of our powers; for means of education and

improvement; for leſſons of ſeveral generous ſentiments and excellent aptitudes; for, indeed a dark and toilſome, but a ſure road to ſuperior perfection and happineſs. Yes, ſuch are all the troubles and calamities of this life, all the puniſhments and chaſtiſements, which the Allgracious inflicts upon us. No evil is continually evil in his fatherly hand, everlaſting evil; never does he lay burdens on us, on purpoſe to oppreſs us, never ſubject us to afflictions that were evitable, or are entirely unprofitable and unattended with any good conſequences; never does he puniſh purely for the ſake of puniſhing us; never does he chaſtiſe without juſt cauſe, never in other than beneficent deſigns, and never can and will his purpoſes be defeated. Imprint this deeply on thy mind, o man; be always ſtriving to render it more clear and certain to thee by diligent reflections on thy own experiences and fortunes; apply it to all that thou ſeeſt and heareſt, whatever happens to thee and to others, as an irrefutable and conſtant truth, as a truth inſeparable from the conception of the conſummately perfect being, if thou wouldſt love God, as thy father, with all thy heart and be truly joyful in him.

Aſcend in ſhort often by meditation into the future world, where all will gradually clear up, all be diſentangled, all diſſolve into perfection and happineſs. The love of the eternal father extends to all times and all eternities. It embraces and bleſſes his children on all the ſtages of their exiſtence, and ſees in

their preſent ſtate the principles and prediſpoſition of all the changes and revolutions however remote, that await them. His deſigns upon them are not confined to the few ſhort moments of this terreſtrial life. Here all is rather germination than development, rather the peep of morn than the light of day, rather preparative than completion, rather proviſion than enjoyment. But it is the Almighty, the Allwiſe, the Allgracious, the Immutable, who provides for the gradual expanſion of this germ, for the riſe and progreſs of this light, for the execution and completion of all his works and prearrangements, and under his inſpection and controul all muſt and will ſooner or later reach its object, its ſummit of perfection. And then will the infinite parental love of God be revealed in its utmoſt ſplendour, in its entire immenſity, and pervade with love and joy all beings that are capable of the felicity of love and joy. In thy meditations therefore never ſtop ſhort at the preſent, o man, o chriſtian; link the preſent always to the future, connect time with eternity; and compriſe together in thy thoughts as much as thou can't, of the deſtination and the events of things and of mankind, if thou wouldſt apprehend and prize them juſtly, if thou wouldſt love God, their creator and father, with all thy heart, and rejoice in him with filial joy.

Yes, — thus thinks the man, the chriſtian, who feels the force of this doctrine, and follows theſe precepts of wiſdom, the man, the chriſtian, who

opens every avenue of his heart to the love of God, and is penetrated by its light and genial warmth, — Yes, with the moſt cordial complacency I muſe upon God, never is the thought of him unwelcome, never is it irkſome to me, never does it fill my ſoul with ſervile fear and ſlaviſh terror; but always procures me light and force and peace and joy. When I think on him, my father in heaven, the father of all mankind, of all beings, I think on all that is great, that is good, that is excellent, that is venerable and endearing, on all that can ſoothe, conſole, rejoice and bleſs me in every period of time, in every place, in every ſtate of exiſtence. — Yes, I rejoice in God, rejoice that he is, that he is the Eternal, the Infinite, the Almighty, the Underived, the Only ſelf-exiſtent original fountain of life, of light, of happineſs, the Creator and Ruler of heaven and earth, that he is eſſential wiſdom and love. I rejoice in the bleſſed relations in which I ſtand towards him as his creature, his child, his ſubject, his worſhipper, and the gracious, paternal diſpoſitions, with which he embraces me and all his children and creatures both in heaven and on earth. I rejoice in all the effects and demonſtrations of his parental tenderneſs, which I daily and hourly and momentarily behold and learn, and feel and enjoy; and as ſuch I acknowledge them, as ſuch I revere all his operations, all his ordinances and diſpenſations, all his commands, all that he wills and does, decrees and permits, gives and takes away,

in

in whatever agreeable or diſagreeable form they may appear. — Yes, it is my delight to draw near unto God, often to meditate upon him, and in all things to look unto him; my delight to fulfil the will of God, my kind and tender father, and to be and to do that in his empire which he wills that I ſhould there be and do. Yes, I am fraught with the moſt inward, ardent longing, to be continually learning better to know that tranſcendently exalted being and to be ever approaching nearer to him. Ah, when ſhall I come and appear before him, that I may ſee his face, when will it be vouchſafed me to know and to experience more of him, to worſhip him more worthily, more cordially to love him and be more fully ſenſible to the felicity of his love! Thus thinks, thus feels, thus ſpeaks the devout ſoul that is inſpired with the true unfeigned love of God. Oh may this be the language of our hearts, may theſe be the ſentiments and feelings of us all! Amen.

SERMON XXXVI.

Why Silence and Solitude are irkſome to many people.

GRACIOUS God, merciful father, never doſt thou ſuffer us to be wanting in motives and means to improvement. They are varied according to our ſeveral neceſſities, and as repeatedly offer themſelves to us as we are in need of freſh incentives and new energies to good. Oh that we did but make the proper, the beſt uſe of them. Thou, o God, art righteous, but to us belongs confuſion of face! Thou art never unmindful of us, thou never ceaſeſt to provide for our happineſs; and we are ſo frequently forgetful of thee, and are ſo apt to ceaſe from rendering ourſelves well-pleaſing in thy ſight! Yes, amidſt ſo many wiſe and kind proviſions which thou haſt made for our improvement, many, perhaps the generality of us are not better, remain conſtantly as we are, and advance not one ſtep nearer to the perfection to which thou calleſt us. Enthraled by a variety of unruly luſts and paſſions, driven to and fro by the ſucceſſive diſtractions of buſineſs and pleaſure, we never totally abandon them

them for ſilence and retirement, never acquire a thorough knowledge of our moſt important intereſts, never provide for them with that ardour which it behoves rational, intelligent beings and chriſtians to do. Ah that at length to-day we might hearken to the voice of truth, imbibe its leſſons with docility and follow them with unremitted diligence! Do thou accompany them with thy all-powerful aid, great father of mercies, and cauſe them to make deep, durable, truly efficacious impreſſions on us, fruitful in real improvement. Entirely relying on the promiſes of thy ſon Jeſus, in his prevailing name we farther lift up our ſuppliant hands to thy eternal throne for thoſe bleſſings which otherwiſe for our unworthineſs we ſhould not dare or for our blindneſs not know how to aſk. Our father, &c.

2 THESSALONIANS iii. 12.

Now them that are ſuch we command and exhort by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that with quietneſs they work, and eat their own bread.

FROM this day, my devout audience, ſeveral, otherwiſe perhaps innocent, but tumultuous and extremely diſtracting entertainments and diverſions, are ſuſpended for a ſeaſon among chriſtians. Now outwardly at leaſt a greater ſtillneſs will reign among them. Now it will be more than uſually perceptible, that we live among people, who believe them-

themſelves formed not ſolely for the preſent, but alſo for a better world, who are acquainted not ſolely with ſenſual, but likewiſe with nobler, ſpiritual pleaſures, and do not regret the former, if they can unmoleſtedly enjoy the latter. But to how many may not theſe reſtrictions be diſagreeable! How many may probably deride them both at home and in company as wretched remains of the old ſuperſtition! How many think themſelves very wiſe in being able to draw this plauſible inference from the practice: Either the amuſements that are now to be ſuſpended are in themſelves and for ever unlawful and ſinful, or they are not; and if they are not, they muſt be as innocent, as harmleſs, as lawful at one time as at another, therefore theſe reſtrictions are the effects of bigotry and ſuperſtition. As if whatever is lawful in itſelf, were likewiſe invariably the fitteſt and the beſt! As though even the good ſhould not frequently yield to the better, and the better to the beſt! As though what is innocent and harmleſs may not very often by too frequent repetitions and too long continued uſe become criminal and injurious! As though we had not the moſt cogent reaſons, for ſeizing all opportunities to check the prevalence of ſenſuality and heedleſſneſs among mankind, and to lead them to reflection, to the ſentiment of their ſuperior dignity and appointment! — — But too many, my pious hearers, ſhun ſilence, avoid ſolitude, and ſeek their ſatisfaction entirely in noiſe and diſtraction.

But how far, how very far are ſuch perſons out of the road of chriſtian wiſdom and virtue, the way of real peace of mind and ſubſtantial enjoyment! With this turn of character, where is that chriſtian diſpoſition which looks more at inviſible than at viſible objects, ſtrives more after the things which are above than after thoſe that are here below; that chriſtian diſpoſition, which teaches us to conſider this terreſtrial life as a ſtate of pilgrimage and exerciſe, the excellence whereof conſiſts in treading in the footſteps of Jeſus, in following him, in becoming like unto him, and thus fitting ourſelves for that ſuperior life which he now enjoys! Oh how I pity the man who has never ſtudied the art of ſilence, has never yet taſted the ſweetneſs of inward repoſe, of a total independence on external objects, never yet enjoyed the felicity of familiar converſe with himſelf and with heaven, has never yet felt that he ſhould even then be contented and happy in God, though all without him had vaniſhed from his ſight, and all other ſources of joy had failed him! May we however, my dear friends, diſmiſs our prejudices againſt ſilence and retirement, learn more juſtly to eſtimate their value, to eſteem them more highly, and to reap more profit from them! May we alſo in this reſpect follow the precept of the apoſtle, who ſays to chriſtians in the words of our text: We command and exhort you, by our lord Jeſus Chriſt, that with quietneſs ye work!

In purſuance of this deſign, my pious hearers, we

we will at preſent confine ourſelves to reflections on the cauſes, why to many of you ſilence and ſolitude are diſagreeable. Theſe cauſes it will be neceſſary for you to underſtand, if ye would put them aſide; more juſtly eſtimate the value of ſilence and ſolitude, acquire a taſte for retirement, and in future make that uſe of it, which every one does, who is ſeriouſly intent upon becoming truly wiſe and good and happy.

The firſt cauſe, why ſilence and ſolitude are ſo frequently irkſome to you, is unqueſtionably this: Becauſe you cannot very well tell what you have to do there, how you ſhould be occupied, how you are to paſs your time. In your ordinary mode of life you paſs either from one buſineſs to another, or from one party of pleaſure to another, or alternately from thoſe to theſe and from theſe to thoſe. Both of them commonly draw off your attention entirely from yourſelves, turn it ſolely on externals, and whirl you about in a round of diſtractions, never leaving you at reſt, never allowing you to get a clear conſciouſneſs of yourſelf or to poſſeſs a lively and conſiderate ſentiment of your perſonal exiſtence. Now ſhould it happen that thoſe occupations and theſe pleaſures with their concomitant diſtractions are at an end; that the greater or leſs exertion of your faculties required for them ſtops; that all that helped you to employ or to conſume your time is departed; that you are reduced to ſilence and ſolitude: you then feel a certain void within, and a ſort

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of abandonment and deſertion about you, which immediately brings on an oppreſſive languor. Your faculties are benumbed for want of a determinate application; your attention is fixed by nothing, and after ſome time roaming about it loſes itſelf in an inſenſible ſtupor, in a thoughtleſs indolence. Accuſtomed to exiſt and to live far more without than within yourſelves, you in a manner entirely ceaſe to exiſt and to live at the very time when you may moſt thoroughly rejoice in your exiſtence and life. Unacquainted with yourſelves, with the wants and the ſtate of your ſoul, indifferent to its moſt important intereſts, unconcerned about your relations towards God and the future world: ye know not how to commune with your own hearts, how to reflect on ſpiritual, inviſible objects, or theſe converſations and theſe ſubjects are not important, not intereſting enough — are too little familiar to you, for ſufficiently occupying your thoughts, for long fixing your attention and cauſing you to forget the want or the abſence of that by which it was detained or diſtracted before. A ſituation which you muſt find to be extremely painful, in which ſilence and ſolitude muſt neceſſarily be uneaſy to you! But what a debility and decay of your natural conſtitution, what a vitiated ſtate of mind, what a diſtance from the prize ſet before you, what a degrading, culpable conduct does not that ſituation imply! To loſe the clear, inward conſciouſneſs of oneſelf, that grand characteriſtic prerogative of man over the brute

brute creation, or but ſeldom to let it move and operate; to know ourſelves far leſs than numberleſs other objects, that ſcarcely deſerve to be known; to be indifferent and ſtupid to our moſt important intereſts, and, immediately at the call of any trifling amuſement to be all life, all ſpirits and activity; without averſion or laſſitude to wear away whole evenings, whole days in chat with the firſt idler, the firſt frivolous viſitor that offers, and not be able to diſcourſe one hour without irkſomeneſs with oneſelf; to take a great, a lively intereſt in any childiſh paſtime, in any dry and tedious converſation on the moſt inſignificant ſubjects, in any idle buffoonery and worn out joke, and to remain frigid and inſenſible at the thought of what our ſpirit is and is to be, at the thought of God, of our immortality and of its reſtorer, Jeſus Chriſt, our lord; to have ſo much to correct in ourſelves, to be capable of ſo much higher perfection and not to reflect upon it, not to employ the moſt favourable opportunities for it, and not be capable of employing them with eaſe and ſatisfaction: how manifeſtly inconſiſtent with the nature and dignity of a rational, immortal being! How diſhonourable to man! What a degradation! How irreconcilable with the ſtate of the chriſtian, with the true end of man!

How? you are reaſonable, moral creatures, formed for immortality; you know God and are placed in the cloſeſt relations towards him; you know Jeſus and boaſt of your fellowſhip with him; you

you are members of a domeſtic, of a civil and of the great human ſociety, and theſe ſeveral connections impoſe on you a variety of duties; you are daily approaching nearer to death, and know, that after it either happineſs or miſery awaits you, according as your conduct here has been: and ſhall not all this furniſh you with the ſtrongeſt motive, the moſt abundant matter for reflection, for occupation and entertainment with yourſelf, when alone and all around is ſtill! Oh what topics have we then to ponder and expatiate upon, on the paſt, on the preſent, on the future, on what we are and are not, what we ſhould and ſhall be, if we have once learnt to attend to theſe objects and to think them of importance! How many opinions have we there to correct, how many ſentiments to improve, how many proſpects to view, how many plans and deſigns to examine, how many actions to try and to repair! And ſhall it be difficult for you to find employment for your thoughts when alone? — And if indeed it be ſo, without direction, cannot ye lay the ſacred writings before you, and particularly the goſpel, cannot ye read the leſſons of divine wiſdom and truth contained in that volume, and there learn to meditate on your moſt ſerious concerns — and if even this were not at firſt attended with pleaſure, may ye not hope however that ye may gradually acquire a taſte and conſtantly more and more taſte for it? Cannot ye likewiſe read other inſtructive and improving books, that may lead you to the know-

knowledge of God in nature, to the contemplation of his grandeur and glory in his works, that may give you an inſight into man and his faculties, and his deſignation, may teach you to obſerve the proceſs of your own mind, its wants, its failings and defects, its approximation towards perfection, or its backſliding from it? Yes, read ſuch writings, and read them with reflection and application to yourſelf, that you may prevent ſilence and ſolitude from being a burden to you. Only no writings, that may excite or encourage inordinate luſts and paſſions within! Ye had far better run from one company to another, however diſtracting and tumultuous, ſo that propriety of manners be but preſerved, than employ retirement in the reading of ſuch writings. No, ſilence and ſolitude have ſomething awful in them; ſomething that puts wantonneſs to flight, that ſtrips ſin of its borrowed charms and pulls off the maſk from vice; ſomething that invites to ſerious meditation, to important contemplations worthy of a rational creature; and woe to him who profanes it by deliberately contriving plans of wickedneſs, by criminal gratifications, by any defilement of the fleſh or of the ſpirit!

Another cauſe, my pious hearers, why ſilence and ſolitude frequently prove burdenſome to you, is, becauſe you there find no food, or not ſufficient food for your paſſions or your leading propenſities. There indeed the vain man can neither ſhew his ſagacity, nor ſhine by his wit, nor diſplay his riches,

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not exhibit his fine figure, nor make parade of any other ſuperior endowment of body or mind. There the envious, the malicious, the moroſe have no opportunity for leſſening and undermining the reſpect, the reputation, the concord, the happineſs of their brethren either by diſparaging inſinuations, or by downright calumnies, or by feigned pity for their failings, or by ingenious doubts concerning the moral rectitude and general probity of mankind. There the curious and inquiſitive, the auſtere cenſor of manners has no means for collecting anecdotes of the little affairs and concerns of his friends, his acquaintances, and neighbours, and then entertaining a circle of accuſers and witneſſes with his ludicrous comments and deciſive verdict upon them. There the lover of noiſy, tumultuous entertainments, of loud and continued burſts of laughter and of furious tranſports cannot enjoy the pleaſure of theſe violent agitations or this exhauſting ſtupefaction, the gameſter cannot follow his propenſity to play, nor the voluptuary regale and delight his ſenſes in ſuch a variety of ways. There all theſe propenſities and paſſions muſt ſubmit to be deprived for the moſt part of that by which they are elſewhere nouriſhed and employed and gratified. — — But is not this very circumſtance one of the greateſt benefits, one of the moſt ſalutary effects of ſilence and retirement? What is more beneficial to a body enfeebled by intemperance, what more neceſſary to the recovery

of its energies than abſtinence from thoſe viands, with which it has been ſurfeited, and the adoption of a ſimpler, a more harmleſs diet? And what is more medicinal to a diſtempered mind, a mind diſordered by irregular paſſions, what can ſooner reſtore it to its loſt repoſe and vigour, than the wiſe employment of ſeaſons and hours, when all around is ſtill, when the paſſions ceaſe their importunity, when peace and ſerenity reign within, when, the objects of ſenſe being abſent, the appetites they excited are abſent likewiſe, and when to him who has never ſo little attended to himſelf, they appear in their native form, diveſted of every borrowed charm, as in reality they are — as ſcandalous, as degrading, as corrupt, as irreconcilable with our happineſs and with that of our brethren, as they are! Men, chriſtians, would ye avoid continuing for ever the ſlaves of your luſts and paſſions, and being more and more tied and bound by the chain of your ſins: oh let ſilence and ſolitude, thoſe deliverers from thraldom and bondage, thoſe friends of wiſdom and liberty, be welcome to you! They afford you the beſt opportunities to ſhake off the yoke of your luſts and paſſions, to detect their inſidious ſnares, to diſcern their pernicious effects, to deſcry the perils to which they are ever hurrying you on, to trace them to their moſt ſecret coverts, to unmaſk them entirely, and thereby to acquire courage and force for gradually breaking their bonds and regaining your liberty.

berty. And if ſilence and ſolitude procure you the means for effecting this, aſſiſt you in it, how ought you to prize them!

A third cauſe, why this ſilence and this ſolitude are ſo frequently irkſome to you, is: becauſe you are there very apt to be attacked and haraſſed by diſagreeable reflections and ſenſations. In the hurry of buſineſs, in the tumult and diſtraction of ſocial amuſements, you forget your defects and failings, your tranſgreſſions and your guilt; there the voice of conſcience is not heard, or if it be, it is preſently overpowered and ſilenced; there every gloomy, melancholy thought is ſcared away by jeſts and laughter, or warded off by greater exertion in your ſecular calling. Quite otherwiſe is the caſe, when neither work nor amuſement engroſs your attention, when you cannot live and act ſo much abroad, when you cannot ramble from object to object, but muſt meet your heart alone, when ſilence and ſolitude oblige you to deſcend into yourſelf, and excite the conſciouſneſs of the deity within. There indeed ye cannot fail of perceiving one defect and failing or another, being reminded of ſome ſins and iniquities or other, of hearing the rebukes of conſcience for your paſt behaviour; there your mind is one while accoſted by duties deſignedly neglected, then by bounties of heaven abuſed, now by noble faculties thrown away, then by opportunities for doing good and becoming better wantonly loſt, now by pious reſolutions unperformed, then by the guilt of vice

and miſery occaſioned by your example or your negligence; there the paſt now preſents itſelf to you with an upbraiding aſpect, and now the future appals you with horror: and all this muſt neceſſarily diſquiet and afflict you. And thus ſilence and ſolitude become irkſome, becauſe they are ſo apt to beget ſuch reflections and ſenſations in your mind. You ſhun thoſe, becauſe you wiſh to eſcape theſe. — — But what do you get by conſtantly driving off theſe diſagreeable ideas and feelings, by continually delaying to examine into their ſources, and to take proper meaſures for ſtopping them up? Ye will not be able always to prevent their intruſion. Do all you can, they will ſooner or later find a time to ſtare you in the face, they will ſeize you and not let you go; and the longer and more violently you ſuppreſs them, the oftener you bid them begone, the more will they ſecretly increaſe in numbers and ſtrength, the more completely will they overpower you at laſt, the more intolerable will be their burden, the more poignant and acute their ſting. And though they ſhould not renew their attacks till death is at hand, how much more terrible will they be by ſuch a reinforcement! And then how vain will be that perturbation and anguiſh which embitter the laſt days and moments of your life! — How much better, my devout hearers, to lend at preſent a patient ear to theſe thoughts and ſenſations, however diſagreeable they may be. At preſent their admonitions may be medicinal to you. At preſent they may guide you to the path

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of wiſdom and amendment; and if you ſubmit to be admoniſhed and taught and corrected by them, how quickly will they give place to quite different, to far more agreeable thoughts and ſenſations! What tranquillity, what pleaſure, what delight will ſilence and ſolitude procure you in their ſtead! What a comfort will it then be for you there to be more feelingly alive to the dignity of human nature, to its great capacities and its ſublime deſtination; and to perceive in a clearer light the apparently confuſed intereſts and events that chequer the life of man, in the light which religion and futurity ſhed upon them! — What a comfort there to approve your ſentiments, and to be ſatisfied with your conduct; to rejoice in your good actions and to reſolve on, and to acquire ſtrength for performing ſtill better; to feel more impreſſively the preſence of God, our father; to have a nearer fellowſhip with Jeſus Chriſt, the firſtborn and firſt completed, our brother and our lord; to be able to form preſages of your future ſuperior life, and to have ſome foretaſte of its purer, tranſcendent happineſs! Oh ſtudy to underſtand and to reliſh theſe felicities, my dear friends, and then moſt aſſuredly the profoundeſt ſilence and the completeſt ſolitude will never prove irkſome to you.

A fourth reaſon finally why perhaps to ſome of you ſilence and ſolitude are dull and tedious, or why ye ſhun them more than is conſiſtent with your welfare, is: becauſe ye are afraid of expoſing yourſelves to the ſneers of others, and of forfeiting the

reputation of being facetious, convivial, pleaſant companions. Silence and ſolitude are in bad repute with the generality, and whoever eſteems, loves, ſeeks them, is very likely to bring upon himſelf the ſuſpicion of ſingularity, or of miſanthropy, or of fictitious piety, or of a defect in polite manners and good breeding. In order to obviate this ſuſpicion, that you may have the true faſhionable air, and live in the reigning ſtyle, inſtead of conſidering that though man was made for action, he was alſo intended for contemplation; that ſolitude has at times a balm for the ſoul; when weary of the world, its follies and its cares, we do well to be alone, to enter into our chamber, to ſhut the door about us, and in ſilence to commune with our heart: inſtead of this you are apt to ſhun and avoid that entirely which is only culpable when carried to exceſs, and ſurrender yourſelves without reſtraint to what is only proper under numerous reſtrictions. Your firſt maxim, your principal aim is, to act with propriety in the opinion of others, and to be happy in their eyes, and to this generally ambiguous and often manifeſtly erroneous maxim, to this mean and idle aim ye frequently ſacrifice your own better judgment and nobler feelings. While ye retain this way of thinking, my pious hearers; (while ye will not venture in any particular inſtance to riſe ſuperior to the opinion of others); while ye dare not do from yourſelves and upon principle, what ye hold to be right and good; as long as ye ſuffer yourſelves to be

be governed entirely by what happens to b the prevailing mode, to be carried down the ſtream of predominant cuſtom, to be drawn now one way and then another by the humour of your acquaintances and aſſociates: ſo long are ye extremely weak and no leſs wretched and unhappy. Ye live, think, feel, act only by others, in others, and after others; you are contented or diſcontented, happy or unhappy, only in the apprehenſion and opinion of others; you are only that, and do only that which others would have you to be and to do. And theſe others are not peradventure the wiſeſt, the beſt, the worthieſt of mankind. No, they are juſt as unwiſe, giddy, earthly minded people as yourſelves, as much the vaſſals of ſenſuality and prejudice as yourſelves, but have perhaps a little more boldneſs and impudence, or have gotten by chance a greater degree of conſequence and authority. What meanneſs, what ignominious dependence! To what purpoſe then are ye thinking, rational creatures? To what purpoſe has your maker endowed you with freedom of choice and power of action? To what end has Chriſt regained for his votaries this liberty and this power? Oh ſtudy to value them more, and to employ them better; ſtrive after greater conſiſtency; and whenever you feel the want of ſilence and ſolitude, ſeek them, enter that holy retreat, there nouriſh and invigorate your mind with the food that is convenient for it, and which in the tumult of the world it cannot find, and ſuffer not yourſelves either in this or

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any other good purpoſe, to be deterred by the opinion or the deriſion of mankind, from doing that which reaſon and conſcience prompt you to do.

And now, my dear friends, ſince you know the cauſes why to ſo many of you ſilence and ſolitude are a burden, and at the ſame time cannot deny the value and utility of them, endeavour to remove thoſe cauſes, and together with a cheerful, but temperate, enjoyment of the pleaſures of ſociety, avail yourſelves alſo, as occaſion offers, of the benefits of a wiſe, a chriſtian uſe of ſilence and retirement. Conſider, that ſilence is the mother of wiſdom, of virtue, and the mind's bleſt calm; the ſource of true ſelf-knowledge, and that thou never canſt aſpire to the knowledge of him whom to know is life eternal, without knowing thyſelf; the ſource of the nobleſt liberty, of a truly chriſtian temper, and of the ſureſt preparation to the ſuperior life. Conſider, that ſooner or later ſeaſons and hours will infallibly come, when all around you will be ſilent, when you will have nothing to occupy you except God and yourſelves, and if ye have then firſt to learn to familiariſe and ſolace yourſelves with this company, you will aſſuredly find that alteration of your condition an inſupportable burden, a perfect martyrdom. Conſider in ſhort, that you are haſtening to the tomb, and that there the profoundeſt ſilence reigns; a ſilence which to the wicked will be a hell, a heaven to the good! Oh happy he, who during the courſe of his life, in the full enjoyment of his faculties,

ties, has known how to avail himſelf of ſilence and ſolitude in collecting ample treaſures of wiſe, of great and noble, bleſſed thoughts and ſentiments, which he may take with him into the ſilence of the grave, with which he may there ſuſtain his ſpirit, and render himſelf ſuſceptible of ſtill ſuperior felicity in the reſurrection of the juſt!

Advent,

SERMON XXXVII.

Chriſtian Sobriety and Vigilance.

GOD, our creator and our father, thou haſt raiſed us to the rank of rational creatures, and thereby imparted to us ſome reſemblance with thee, the ſupreme and abſolutely perfect ſpirit. We not only are and live, but we know and intimately feel that we are and live. We can reflect on what we are and what we ought to be and to become, and ſoar in thought even to thee, our creator and father. We can look back on the long ſince paſt and carry our view into the far remote futurity, and connect them both with the preſent. Gracious God, with what powers, with what pre-eminences haſt thou endowed us, thy children! And what means, what impulſes to wiſdom, to virtue, to happineſs haſt thou not thus vouchſafed us! Oh that all of us might entirely feel the dignity of our nature, and the value of our privileges, the value of the honour of being formed after thy likeneſs and conſtantly make the beſt the worthieſt uſe of that honour and of theſe privileges! Ah let us never forget what by thy bounty we are and how much more by thy bounty

bounty we might be and become! Let us never degrade ourſelves by folly and ſin, never render ourſelves unworthy of the ſtation and the rank, which thou haſt aſſigned us among thy creatures; never recede but always advance on the path of perfection. Bleſs to the furtherance of theſe deſigns the leſſons of truth which we ſhall now receive from thy word. Let us not only hear and underſtand and approve them, but ſo admit and inwardly digeſt them, that they may really correct and improve us. Theſe our petitions we offer up unto thee in the name of thy ſon Jeſus, and truſting patiently and comfortably in his promiſes, thus farther addreſs thee. Our father, &c.

1 PETER v. 8.

Be ſober, be vigilant.

ATTENTION, my devout audience, continued, not eaſily wearied attention is one of the principal and ſureſt means, of proceeding farther in any buſineſs, how difficult ſoever it may be, and at laſt as far as it is poſſible to proceed in it. He that has not his attention under command, he that is not capable of fixing it, of drawing it off from ſeveral objects and turning it to one alone, or of fixing it for a proper length of time upon it, will perhaps wiſh much good, intend much good, propoſe and begin much good, yet will actually do and bring to full effect but little good; he will, in whatever it be, whether

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in the ſciences or in buſineſs, whether in his own improvement or in his endeavours at the improvement of others, one while ſtand ſtill, at other times retreat, every where meet with inſuperable obſtacles, unconquerable difficulties. Perhaps he may acquire an extenſive knowledge of ſeveral things, but few profound, ſolid perceptions embracing the whole and elucidating the combinations of its various parts; perhaps excite ſome good deſires and affections in his ſoul, but obtain few good, virtuous habitudes; perhaps chalk out many good plans, contrive many public-ſpirited projects, but contribute little to the execution of them. Wherever courage, ſtrength of mind, reſolution, intrepidity, fortitude, are required, theſe qualities neceſſarily include a ſuperior degree of attention and a greater power over attention, a uſe of it more dependent on our will. Without this endowment never any one has ſignalized himſelf either on the career of heroiſm, or in the ſphere of buſineſs and activity, or in the province of arts and ſciences, or in what is of greater conſequence than all theſe, in the purſuit after ſuperior virtue and purer devotion. What prominent and grand attainments then are to be expected from the generality of perſons in the preſent times, when vanity, frivolity, a flighty admiration and forgetfulneſs of moſt things, an indolent abhorrence of all exertion and effort, a reſtleſs, impatient vagrancy of thought from one object to another, from one occupation to another, from one diſtracting or ſtunning

amuſement to another, are ſuch generally prevalent defects, or rather laudable and honourable diſtinctions indiſpenſable to people of faſhion. — What truth and wiſdom teach us on this head, my pious hearers, we may alſo imbibe from the precepts of religion, in which all the treaſures of really uſeful truth and really profitable wiſdom are contained. It exhorts us on all occaſions, and particularly in our text, to ſobriety and to vigilance, and with theſe exhortations we cannot comply without making the beſt uſe of our attention on ourſelves and the objects around us. Whoever is incapable of continued, diligent attention, whoever has not the command of it, whoever is interrupted in his reflections or in his buſineſs by every trifling circumſtance that occurs, ſuffers himſelf to be diſtracted and amuſed by every accidental impreſſion of external objects, can neither be ſober nor vigilant, as it behoves a wiſe man and a chriſtian to be. Of this you will not entertain a doubt, my devout auditors, if ye condeſcend to accompany me in my farther conſiderations on this ſubject. I will tell you wherein this ſobriety and vigilance conſiſt, and then particularly point out to you, what ye have in this reſpect to do. May ye not only perceive the reaſonableneſs of theſe my admonitions, but likewiſe learn to obſerve and practiſe them! Be ſober, be vigilant.

By the ſobriety which the apoſtle here recommends to chriſtians, we are not ſolely and not principally to underſtand temperance in the proper ſenſe of the word,

word, or the moderate uſe of meats and drinks adapted to our wants and to the dictates of prudence. No, the ſobriety here ſpoken of is of a larger compaſs and of a nobler kind. It is that ſtate of mind, when a man, free from headſtrong, violent, boiſterous paſſions, has a clear conſciouſneſs of himſelf, of the true end of his being, of the relations in which he ſtands towards God and man and other objects, and agreeably to this conſciouſneſs, judges of whatever befals him and what is incumbent on him. It is that ſtate of mind, when the man, neither hoodwinked by prejudices and errors, nor borne along by the prevalence of cuſtom and example, nor hurried away by ſenſual luſts, aſſerts the maſtery over himſelf, and in his determinations and actions is conducted by calm conſideration and juſt perceptions. With this ſobriety vigilance is very cloſely connected. The latter is a natural, unavoidable conſequence of the former. It conſiſts in a ſteady obſervation of the ſeveral changes that happen within us or without us, and the uſeful or pernicious alterations they may occaſion in our habits of thought and ſenſation and in our conduct, and in ſo availing ourſelves of them, and ſo behaving towards them as is conſiſtent with truth and with our duty, and is moſt correſpondent with our exertions after the ſuperior perfection of a chriſtian; therefore in being not carelsſs and indifferent either in regard to the thoughts and deſires that ariſe within us, or in regard to the connections, in which we are placed, whether voluntarily or acci-

dentally, with other perſons and objects, either in regard to the temptations and provocations to evil, or in regard to the opportunities and encouragements to good, but conſider, apprehend and treat all theſe as matters whereof the conſequences may be of extreme importance both to ourſelves and others, which may have a very prejudicial or a very ſalutary influence on our moral condition, on the perfection and happineſs both of ourſelves and others.

Theſe are the general notions we ſhould form of chriſtian ſobriety and vigilance as the means of progreſs on the path of virtue. Wouldſt thou now, my chriſtian brother, who art earneſtly deſirous of thy improvement, and art aiming at the prize of perfection, preciſely know, what thou haſt to do and to obſerve, to what in the accompliſhment of this duty thou art principally to direct thy attention, let me recommend to thee the following ſuggeſtions.

Wouldſt thou be ſober and vigilant, conſtantly endeavour to uphold in thy mind a clear conſciouſneſs of thyſelf, of the true end of thy being, of thy faculties, of thy relations towards God and towards mankind; a clear and full conſciouſneſs, of what thou art and oughteſt to be to thyſelf and to others, of what thou at preſent art and what thou hereafter art deſigned to be and to become. This conſciouſneſs, my dear friends, is the glory of man, the peculiar characteriſtic of the wiſe man and the chriſtian, the ſureſt preſervative againſt every folly and ſin, the ſtrongeſt incentive to all that is beautiful and generous

and great. Deſtitute of this conſciouſneſs man is the ſport of chance, the ſlave of whatever outwardly acts upon him, the victim of artifice and wickedneſs — is deceived by every outſide appearance, overcome by every temptation, ſurpriſed by every danger, trampled on by every enemy to his peace. What in truth is it, what really does a man in ſinning, in acting fooliſhly and iniquitouſly? He forgets what God is and what he himſelf is and what mankind and the other ſurrounding objects are that he has to do with; he loſes the clear conſciouſneſs of himſelf, of the proper end of his being, of his connections and relations. The child, that behaves undutifully to his parents, forgets that he is a child, and that his parents are parents. The man that ſurrenders himſelf to the tranſports of rage, forgets that he is a rational creature, whoſe greateſt diſtinction conſiſts in the government of himſelf. The fool, who puts off his converſion to an uncertain futurity, forgets that he is mortal, and that perhaps to-morrow no time for converſion will any longer be in his power. The indolent man, who delays the performance of the good action, which he might do to-day, to a remoter period, forgets that abilities and opportunities for doing good are not abſolutely dependent on him, and that to-morrow, the next hour, the next moment are as uncertain as his life. — The ſelfiſh, the hardhearted man, whom neither the ſorrows nor the joys of another can touch, forgets that he ſtands in the cloſeſt connections with innumerable other

perſons, that they are all his brothers and ſiſters, that he is beholden to them for numberleſs ſervices and aſſiſtances, and that their happineſs is indiſſolubly connected with his own. The ſlave of pleaſure, who blindly follows his ſenſual, carnal appetites, forgets that he is not entirely fleſh; that ſenſuality degrades him to a level with the beaſts of the field, and keeps his ſpirit, which is immortal, in a continual retrogreſſion from the true end of its creation. And thus every folly, every ſin, tends to weaken, to blunt and to efface the conſciouſneſs of one's ſelf, and to ſuperinduce a forgetfulneſs of what we and what others are. — Wouldſt thou therefore avoid the ways of folly and ſin, o man, be ſober and watchful; uphold and ſtrengthen the inward conſciouſneſs of thyſelf with all poſſible care; ſhun every thing that ſo diſtracts, ſo ſtuns, ſo puts thee out of all compoſure of mind, that thou forgetteſt thyſelf and the relations in which thou art placed, take care that the ſentiment of what thou art and ſhouldſt be and do, is never totally obſcured amidſt thy temporal affairs, amidſt thy recreations and amuſements, and that thou never loſe ſight of thyſelf, if thou wouldſt ſecure thy innocence, fulfil thy duty, maintain thy dignity, and offend neither God nor thy brethren.

Wouldſt thou farther be ſober and vigilant, my chriſtian brother, obſerve all the thoughts that ariſe in thy mind, and be not abſolutely indifferent to any of them. Often in a manner unperceived, while

we are in converſation with others, or employed in reading ſome book, or at the time when our attention is not particularly attracted, when perhaps for the ſake of relaxation we reſign ourſelves entirely to the impreſſion of external objects, or to the recollection of former ideas, frequently, I ſay, bad thoughts will imperceptibly as it were ſlide into our minds, there ſecretly ſtrike root, and become, though perhaps not till ſome time afterwards, the occaſions and grounds to various falſe inferences, impure ſentiments, and actions unlawful and at enmity with our uſual train of thoughts and ſenſations, the origin and ſources whereof we ourſelves are at a loſs to diſcover. — — On the other ſide, frequently and in like manner and by the ſame means good, ſerious, luminous thoughts, productive of uſeful conſequences, ſtart up in our mind, which might fill up ſome chaſms in our knowledge, connect ſeveral parts of it more coheſively together, add new ſpirit and energy to ſeveral known truths, abate the force of ſome inordinate affection, and guard, conduct, improve and pacify us in numberleſs inſtances; but which, from our not attending to them, becauſe we are not ſober and not watchful, find no acceptance, cannot aſſociate themſelves with any already preſent ideas, leave no impreſſion on our mind, but only as it were paſs by it and vaniſh as ſuddenly as they aroſe. — — — Beware of this heedleſsneſs, o thou who art ſincerely deſirous of becoming truly wiſe and truly good, and of continually approaching nearer

nearer to chriſtian perfection. By no means ſuffer thy thoughts to roam at random without direction and controul, aſſociating or ſeparating, at the diſpoſal of chance, as the perſons and the objects which accidentally ſurround thee and act upon thee ſhall determine. Take care not to leave thy mind open to every impreſſion from without, to every ſemblance of the beautiful and good, to every gentle, but perhaps bewitching voice; take care that it do not, negligently and without examination, admit and inſert every impreſſion that happens to be thus made upon it into its moral conſtitution. No, watch over all thy thoughts, ſince it is never of abſolutely equal import, what and how thou thinkeſt; becauſe the thought, which is now admitted and harboured by thee, will perhaps not till after ſeveveral years reward or puniſh thee for its precipitate reception. Watch therefore over every evil thought, which would obtrude itſelf upon thee or glide into thy mind, leſt it ſettle there and ſtrike its fibres deeper, leſt by its connection with others it gain ſtrength, leſt by inſenſible degrees it become a principle, leſt it ſprout up into evil deſires and at length beguile thee into evil action. Approve no thought, admit no thought into thy mind, which thou durſt not think aloud, which thou durſt not unreluctantly reveal to thy moſt reſpected friend, which thou durſt not connect with the thought of God and his immediate preſence. Reject and drive off all thoſe which cannot endure this trial, as the declared enemies of thy

perfection and happineſs, as thoughts which would contaminate thy mind and deſtroy its peace, however ſplendid the garb in which they appear. — — But watch likewiſe over all good, religious thoughts that occur to thy mind, that thou mayſt detain and fix them, make them entirely thy own, aſſociate them with as many other thoughts as thou canſt, that thou mayſt thus eaſily revive their recollection and always reckon upon their light, their force, their influence, whenever thou haſt occaſion for it. Every thought of this kind is a valuable augmentation of thy real permanent wealth, of thy intrinſic perfection; a bliſsful ſource of pure unſullied pleaſures in retirement, of wiſe judgments and good actions in ſociety, of comfort in afflictions, of aliment and ſatisfaction for the future world.

Wouldſt thou be ſober and vigilant, o thou, to whom the advancement of thy ſpiritual perfection is a ſerious, a heartfelt concern; carefully obſerve all that paſſes without thee, in the narrower or larger ſphere of thy life and operation, among thy friends and acquaintance, thy companions and fellow-ſubjects, whether in reference to morality and religion, or as it may have an influence on thee and thy ſentiments and thy conduct. Not for the ſake of gratifying thy curioſity, or for judging others with ſeverity, but to the intent that thou mayſt learn wiſdom and prudence from it. Obſerve therefore the revolutions that occur around thee, in regard to the mode of thinking and living, occupations and pleaſures,

ſures, hopes and apprehenſions, that thou mayſt alter thy conduct accordingly, or arm thyſelf againſt forced and injurious alterations in them. Conſider how far theſe ſeveral objects, obnoxious to ſuch a variety of changes, are favourable or unfavourable to thy virtue and probity, how far they may alleviate or obſtruct thee in the diſcharge of thy duty. Never let it be indifferent to thee, how thy family, thy ordinary companions, thy friends are wont to think on matters of importance, what principles they adopt and follow, how they ſtand affected towards religion and virtue and human happineſs, whether they are grown more ſerious or more thoughtleſs, more zealous in behalf of truth and goodneſs or more indifferent towards them, whether they themſelves are becoming better or worſe, are going forwards or backwards; for their judgment, their notions and their example will always, unleſs thou cloſely watcheſt over them and over thyſelf, have more or leſs influence upon thy judgment, thy notions and thy conduct. Their levity will imperceptibly relax thy prudent gravity, their indifference weaken thy zeal, their ſcepticiſm undermine thy faith, their cold, unfeeling temperament gradually chill thy heart, and their ſloth and negligence in goodneſs even greatly diminiſh thy ardour after higher perfection. Never in ſhort let it be indifferent to thee, what faſhion, what manners and cuſtoms, what maxims, what rules of propriety here or there, at one time or another predominate, and demand

of thee ſubmiſſion and obedience, or candour and forbearance, or oppoſition and reſiſtance. Bring them all to trial, and try them with the utmoſt freedom and impartiality, without regard to the reſpect in which they ſtand, or to the multitude and quality of thoſe who adopt and approve them. And the more univerſal and unconfined the prevalence of certain principles and rules of conduct, or certain cuſtoms are among the great maſs of thoughtleſs or ſuperficial perſons, ſo much the leſs do thou follow them without conſciouſneſs and without conſideration, if thou wouldſt maintain the character of a wiſe man, of a chriſtian, and preſerve uninjured thy integrity.

Wouldſt thou laſtly be ſober and vigilant, look frequently around thee, whether ſome temptation be not advancing towards thee, leſt thou ſhouldſt be attacked by it, ere thou haſt armed thyſelf againſt it. Do this, whenever thou art going to thy work, to the affairs of thy calling; do it, whenever thou art going into company. In both caſes previouſly beſtow ſome thoughts on the objects, on the perſons, thou wilt there have to do with, on what thou art and ſhouldſt be to them, and what they are and ſhould be to thee; think on the deſirable or adverſe occurrences, which may befall thee there, on the praiſe or the cenſure, the good or the evil, which thou wilt probably ſee and hear; on the nouriſhment which vanity, or ambition, or covetouſneſs, or fleſhly luſts may find; on the opportunities and

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inducements to iniquity, or to diſſimulation and falſehood, or to envy and to diſcontent, or to diſpleaſure and anger, or to other ſins and failings, which will there encounter thee; and thus weaken their baleful influence, by previouſly preparing thyſelf for them, by firmly expecting them, and therefore by behaving towards them without ſurpriſe or confuſion, conſiſtently with thy corrected temper. — But again look frequently around thee, whether ſome opportunity for improvement or for doing good may not offer itſelf to thee, that it may not ſlip away ere thou haſt ſeized and profited by it. Numberleſs opportunities of this nature eſcape thee, even though thou be ſober and watchful. Thou canſt ſtill often trace their march, ſtill hear their retreating tread, but the moment when they were in thy power is gone by, they are vaniſhed never more to return. And how many more, equally precious and irremeable opportunities for becoming wiſe and good and happy, and acquiring various merits in regard to others, in addition to the former account, muſt elapſe entirely unperceived and unemployed by him who is not ſober and not watchful! And if hereafter all theſe neglected opportunities ſhould again viſionarily preſent themſelves to his too late awakened imagination, what a cruel but unavailing remorſe will be the penalty of his ſtupidity and want of attention!

Therefore, o man, o chriſtian, who wouldſt at preſent aſſert thy dignity, and prepare for thyſelf a pleaſant, a happy futurity, be ſober and vigilant!

Deeply

Deeply imprint this precept of wiſdom on thy heart. Be jealous of thy grand prerogative, the conſciouſneſs of thyſelf, and the command thou haſt of thy attention. Conſider always, that it is this which principally elevates thee above the beaſts of the field, and to an affinity with the angels, diſtinguiſhing thee as the creature that is created in the likeneſs of God! Only by ſobriety and vigilance wilt thou eſcape the mazes of folly, the ſnares of ſin, moſt of the temptations and dangers of the world, the generality of the moſt afflicting evils, happily diſcomfit the dangers and temptations which thou canſt not avoid, and learn courageouſly to bear the evils which thou art not able to ward off. Only by ſobriety and vigilance wilt thou truly triumph in thy life, be thoroughly eſtabliſhed in virtue, and be qualified for receiving the whole of its glorious rewards. What are indeed all the pleaſures, the delights in which we loſe the conſciouſneſs of ourſelves, or in which we muſt purpoſely blunt it; the pleaſures, the delights which we do not ſoberly enjoy, on which we cannot calmly reflect either during the enjoyment, or when it is over? Can theſe be worthy of the man, the rational man? What are even all the good deeds, which we perform without conſciouſneſs, without conſideration, more by mechanical rules and blind impulſe, than from juſt perceptions and inward ſentiment of what is right and fitting! How much by that defect muſt they not loſe of their worth! No, that joy alone is truly worthy

worthy the man, which he enjoys in the full conſciouſneſs of himſelf! That generous act alone completely remunerates its author, which he performs in the perfect conſciouſneſs of himſelf and of what he is doing! Theſe alone are joys and actions, which will accompany us out of the preſent into the future world, and there continue to reward and to exhilarate us for ever! Oh let us endeavour to accumulate this treaſure for futurity, and likewiſe in this reſpect and for this reaſon, be always ſober and always vigilant!

SERMON XXXVIII.

What renders the Obſervance of the divine Commandments eaſy.

GOD, we know thee, we worſhip thee as the creator and ſovereign of us, and of the whole univerſe, as our ſupreme lawgiver and judge, as the being who regulates and conducts all the events of our lives, as our moſt gracious benefactor and father. We proſtrate ourſelves in the duſt before thee as thy creatures, as thy ſubjects, as thy children, and deſire with continually more vivacity and ſtrength to feel, what veneration, what love, what unbounded, willing obedience we owe thee! Yes, to thee all is in ſubjection; at thy nod worlds ariſe and paſs away; thee both heaven and earth obey, the whole innumerable hoſt of ſuns and ſtars, and the ſand on the ſhores of the ocean, the moſt exalted ſpirit that worſhips before thy throne, and the worm that crawls in the duſt; and to obey thee is truth, is order, is life, is felicity. Yes, all thy laws are perfect wiſdom and benignity, pure ſources and methods of content and ſatisfaction. And this are they even

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to us, whom thou deſigneſt here to exerciſe in obedience, and thereby educate to a ſuperior life. All the mandates which thou iſſueſt, are the precepts of a father, who loves his children, and provides for their beſt intereſts; parental admonitions against dangers and diſtreſſes, againſt pain and miſery, wiſe, benign directions to perfection and happineſs. And how greatly does thy paternal affection facilitate the obedience which thou requireſt of us! What ability, what motives, what aſſiſtance, what reſources thou haſt granted us to that end! Oh how willingly, how gladly ſhould we obey thee! How eaſy, how delightful ſhould it be to us to do that which is agreeable in thy ſight! How ungratefully towards thee and how inimically to ourſelves do we act, whenever we refuſe it! And yet we ſo often refuſe thee our obedience! And yet we frequently obey thee rather from conſtraint than from affection, more for ſhow than in deed and in truth! O father of mercies, we are covered with ſhame and confuſion at the idea! Oh that we might however henceforth be more dutifully diſpoſed towards thee, and ſeek and find our higheſt honour, our greateſt pleaſure in the obſervance of thy commands! Oh ſend down upon us thy light, thy life and energy, moſt bounteous parent! Teach us thyſelf to do thy will, and conduct us by thy good ſpirit along the even path that leads to happineſs and thee. Bleſs to this end the contemplations, which are now to employ our minds. Grant us to perceive the truth with inward conviction,

viction, and aſſiſt us ſincerely to follow its precepts. For theſe bleſſings we implore thee in the name of thy ſon Jeſus, our ſaviour, and in ſtedfaſt reliance on his promiſes, thus further addreſs thee: Our father, &c.

1 JOHN v. 3.

His commandments are not grievous.

FEW perſons are ſo inſenſible or ſo depraved, as never to be moved by the beauty of a thoroughly virtuous and godly life, as never to entertain the wiſh to lead ſuch a life, and to partake in the benefits and felicities ariſing from it. Few perhaps have arrived at a certain time of life, without having more than once conceived the reſolution of endeavouring to lead ſuch a life, and the generality have, it may be, even made ſome attempts that way, gone a few paces on the road of chriſtian perfection. But how comes it then, that this generous wiſh with ſo many has never proceeded any farther, that this good purpoſe is ſo ſeldom carried into effect, that theſe attempts are uſually ſo unavailing, that we ſo quickly abandon that road? We are apt to repreſent the buſineſs as far more difficult than it is, and then ſuffer theſe imaginary or exaggerated difficulties to deter us from it. On learning the requiſitions of the divine law, on hearing in what manner the temper and the whole life of a chriſtian ſhould be framed; on beholding virtue in her full ſplen-

ſplendour, in all her dignity; our courage too often fails, and without examining the matter farther, we exclaim in a deſponding tone: Who is ſufficient for theſe things? Who is able to keep and to perform all this? Who can attain this exalted object? — But is this the true ſtate of the caſe, my devout audience? Does not our ſaviour expreſsly ſay, that his yoke is eaſy and his burden light? Does not the apoſtle in our text affirm, that his commandments are not grievous? Oh could I now, my dear friends, thoroughly convince you of it, clearly ſet before you the poſſibility and facility of obſerving the divine commandments and thus inſpire you with courage and reſolution to the leading of a truly virtuous and godly life! Well then, we will inquire, what properly renders an affair, a buſineſs, an undertaking eaſy, and then conſider whether it be not applicable to the obſervance of the divine commandments, to virtue and piety.

In order that an affair, a buſineſs, an undertaking ſhould be eaſy to us, we muſt before all things have a perſpicuous and accurate comprehenſion of whatever belongs to it; we muſt know what we have to do and how we ought to do it. We ſhould not be able to doubt that it is right and fit and neceſſary, that we are bound to do it, that we cannot neglect it without detriment and loſs. And in regard to virtue and piety, in regard to the obſervance of the divine commandments, can we otherwiſe than by our own fault be in any want of this knowledge, of this

this conviction? What do we learn from reaſon? What are we taught by looking at the world around us? What ſays our own heart? Do they not all preach the love of truth, the love of order, the love of God, the love of man? Do they not all caution us againſt ſin? Do they not all ſummon us to duty and to virtue? What ſays our conſcience in every particular caſe, when we have to chuſe between right and wrong, good and bad? How rarely is he left in doubt or uncertainty, who hearkens to its voice and is ready to follow its decrees? — And the holy ſcriptures! How plainly do they inform us of the will of God and of our duty! What intelligible, poſitive, infallible, profitable rules of conduct do they not ſupply us with! How ſure muſt we be of their intrinſic wiſdom and worth and of their obligations upon us, ſince they are the laws of God, our ſupreme ruler and judge, our moſt gracious father, the precepts of Jeſus, his ſon and ſubſtitute? — And our own experience as well as that of others, how little will they allow us to doubt of the neceſſity and felicity of a virtuous and godly carriage, of the infamy and miſery of a vicious courſe of life! — No, think not to exculpate thyſelf, o man, on account of the difficulty of diſtinguiſhing right from wrong, good from bad, when thou art acting unjuſtly, rejecting the good and chuſing the bad! Conſult only thy own heart, aſk only thy conſcience, they will tell thee in moſt caſes no leſs quickly than ſurely, what thou haſt to do or not to do. Plead not, o chriſtian,

chriſtian, the difficulty of knowing the will of God and of not miſtaking the path of virtue, when thou tranſgreſſeſt the one and turneſt aſide from the other. The chriſtian the leaſt of all mankind can be in want of this knowledge. When he ſins, he ſins againſt his better knowledge and his conſcience. If he fall, he falls not in the dark, on an unknown, darkſome road, but in the effulgence of a brilliant light, on a plain and even path.

In order farther that an affair, a buſineſs, an enterpriſe may prove eaſy to us, it ſhould be proportionate to our abilities. We ſhould have no apprehenſion of ſinking under the weight of it, or after repeated unſucceſsful attempts of not being able to bring it to effect. We muſt be able to do that which we have to do. And does not the accompliſhment of our duty, the obſervance of the divine commandments belong to this claſs of things? Would then God have required it of us, if we were deficient in the abilities neceſſary for it? Can it be ſuppoſed that he, the All-wiſe, would propoſe to attain ends, to the attainment whereof the competent means were not provided? Would he, the All-gracious, require impoſſibilities of us, and then call us to account and puniſh us, for not having done that which we could not do? Would then the Juſt, the Holy-one, the judge of the world, propoſe to gather where he had not ſtrewn, or to reap where he had not ſown? No, as ſurely as God has given us laws and annexed penalties to the tranſgreſſion of them,

ſo ſurely muſt we be able to keep them ; as ſurely as he requires of us virtue and piety, ſo ſurely muſt we be capable of them. — And will experience allow us to doubt of it? Have there ever been perſons, who have revered the divine commandments with willing and conſtant obedience, and are there not at preſent perſons who do ſo ; have there ever been perſons, who were virtuous and pious with their whole heart, and are there not now perſons, who really are ſo: then muſt the obſervance of the divine commandments, then muſt virtue and piety not tranſcend the powers of man, then muſt they be likewiſe not beyond ours, who are men like others, who are chriſtians and in that quality are favoured with renovated, ſuperior energies to goodneſs ! And what a cloud of witneſſes, what ſhining patterns of obedience and righteouſneſs do not the writings of both the old and new teſtaments preſent to our view! What noble ſentiments, what grand achievements, what reſplendent virtues has not the hiſtory of all ages and nations to the honour of human nature and in proof of their abilities handed down to immortality! — And we ourſelves, my dear friends, may we not alſo know among us, perſons who govern themſelves in all points by the precepts of the divine commandments, who are entirely devoted to virtue and piety, and who are men like us, neither ſtronger nor weaker than we are ? And we ourſelves, my dear friends, have not we frequently fulfilled our duty? Have not we often laid

laid ourſelves under conſtraint? Have not we from obedience to God done or omitted many things, which otherwiſe we ſhould not have done or omitted? If that has at one time been poſſible and eaſy, wherefore ſhould it prove impoſſible and difficult at another? If we have been able to do it once, wherefore ſhould we not likewiſe be able to do it again? Oh what are we not all capable and deſirous of undertaking, of riſking, of affording when any particular truth of religion has effectually found its way to our hearts, when we are alarmed at ſome ſtrange accident, when we have juſt eſcaped ſome imminent danger, when we are unexpectedly recovered from ſome mortal diſeaſe, when we have experienced ſome ſtriking inſtances of the complacency or of the diſpleaſure of heaven! What commandment, what injunction of the Almighty then appears to us too difficult or above our ability to comply with? This at leaſt ſhews, that the obſervance of them is in itſelf poſſible and in ſome caſes eaſy. There are it is true particular circumſtances, that on ſuch occaſions furniſh us with thoſe motives, that reſolution and that ability to goodneſs. But are we not alone to blame, if we know not how to ſupply the want of theſe circumſtances? Are not the doctrines of religion at all times divine wiſdom and divine power? May we not as frequently and as earneſtly be occupied in them as we pleaſe? Are we not always ſurrounded by innumerable affecting inſtances of the divine bounty? Do we not conſtantly enjoy num-

berleſs unmerited benefits? Are we not always in danger of death? Are we not always liable to a variety of diſaſtrous accidents? — Nay, ſeek not to exculpate thyſelf by any defect of thy faculties, o man, when thou declineſt the obſervance of the divine commandments. Thou wouldſt thus arraign the righteous lawgiver of injuſtice, the moſt gracious being of inhuman ſeverity and palpably contradict both thy own experience and the experience of myriads of perſons beſides. No, employ thy capacities, exerciſe thy faculties, ſtrengthen them by practice, do heartily and faithfully what thou canſt, and thou wilt be ever able to do more, and never have cauſe to complain of the want of the neceſſary abilities.

An affair, a buſineſs, an undertaking is thirdly eaſy to us, when we have numerous and ſtrong motives to it, and the ſtronger and more various theſe motives are, the eaſier muſt it be to us. — What is there that we cannot accompliſh, what obſtacles that we cannot ſurmount, what difficulties that we cannot conquer, what dangers not contend with and vanquiſh, when impelled by neceſſity, when animated by affection and gratitude, when inflamed by ambition, when actuated by the hopes of ſome great advantage, when menaced by poverty and diſtreſs! To what reſtraints can we not ſubmit, what paſſion ſo violent that we cannot controul, what manners ſo repugnant to our tempers that we cannot aſſume, when in the preſence of ſome perſon of high rank, ſome

ſome potentate, or when in company with people whom we honour and eſteem, and whoſe diſapprobation and cenſure we ſhould be ſorry to incur! And which of theſe motives to human action is not operated on by religion? Are we not impelled by duty, by gratitude, by love, ambition, hope, fear with combined efforts to the obſervance of the divine commandments? — God is our creator, our ſovereign, our judge: on him we entirely depend: by him are regulated and governed all the events of our lives: in his hand are life and death, happineſs and miſery. He commands and we are to obey. From his power, nothing not even death can ſcreen us; from his chaſtiſement, nothing, not even the grave can protect us; his diſpleaſure is attended by miſery and ruin both in the preſent and in the future world. And the laws of ſuch a God, the laws of the Almighty, ſhall we wilfully tranſgreſs? To the diſpleaſure of ſuch a God, to the diſpleaſure of the Almighty, ſhall we expoſe ourſelves by obſtinate diſobedience! —— God fills heaven and earth with his preſence: he is nowhere far from us: no darkneſs can conceal us from him: he is the infallible witneſs of all that we think, intend and do: he beholds, he knows, he judges everything, as it is in deed and in truth, and no ſemblance can deceive him. And ſhall we not be awed in the preſence of the Omniſcient? In the preſence of the Omniſcient ſhall we deliberately do anything evil or neglect any thing good? Shall the ſentiment of his preſence

allow us ever to plead the want of motive and ability for duty and virtue? —— God is our ſupreme benefactor: he is eſſential love. From love he brought us into being and endowed us with ſo many gifts, beſtowed on us ſuch various ſatisfactions, ſo many joys of life. From love he bears with us, has pity on us, provides for us, refreſhes us with all kinds of ſpiritual and corporeal bleſſings. From love he ſent to us his ſon from heaven, gave him up to death for us, by him proclaimed to us grace, pardon, felicity, preſented us by him with light, conſolation, hope, aſſurance and all the requiſites to our improvement, to our pacification, to our preſent and future happineſs. And ſhall we not love with our whole hearts, we who are daily and hourly enjoying his bounties, the effects of his love, this benefactor, this affectionate deity? Shall we not willingly and joyfully obey him from gratitude and love? —— His ſon, his vicegerent Jeſus, ſo deeply abaſed himſelf for our beſt intereſts, did, ſacrificed, ſuffered ſo much, ſo infinitely much for us, died for us upon the croſs, lives for us in heaven, and ſhall we refuſe to do his will, the will of the God and father both of him and of us? And ſhall not affection for him, our deliverer, incite us cheerfully to renounce and abandon whatever is diſpleaſing to him, and cheerfully to do and to ſuffer, whatever may render us capable and worthy of his complacency? —— The commandments of God are at the ſame time juſt and righteous altogether, all tending

tending to the promotion of our perfection and happineſs. The faithful obſervance of them brings with it glory and honour, procures us ſatisfaction and joy. The deliberate tranſgreſſion of them plunges us into diſgrace and miſery. And the Almighty is our judge, the rewarder of the good and of the evil. Rewards and puniſhments await us in eternity. Our preſent conduct is cloſely concatenated with our future deſtinies. Whatever a man here ſows, that ſhall he there reap. What arguments for obedience! What inducements to the obſervance of the divine commandments! How eaſy muſt it be to us, if we expand our hearts to theſe arguments, to theſe inducements and do not reſiſt their force.

A fourth circumſtance, my devout hearers, that alleviates an affair, a buſineſs, an undertaking to us, is, if we may reaſonably promiſe ourſelves aſſiſtance and relief againſt eventual obſtacles and difficulties, or under the ſenſe of abated ſtrength. And this likewiſe is the caſe in the obſervance of the divine commandments; this likewiſe is capable of rendering it eaſy to us. Are we ſeriouſly determined to lead a virtuous and godly life; we can never but by our own fault be deficient in aſſiſtance and ſupport. We find this aſſiſtance among mankind, we find it with God, we find it in many external circumſtances and reſtoratives. Aſſiſtance among mankind. Are there not wiſe, good perſons, are there not devout chriſtians, who are farther advanced in know-

ledge and virtue than we are, and who are ready to adviſe, ready to aſſiſt, their weaker brethren, ready to encourage them, ready to communicate to them their greater ſagacity and abilities and to ſupport them in various ways in their exertions after chriſtian perfection? How eaſily are good, pious ſentiments communicated! How eaſily one heart rouzes, animates, inflames another! And how extenſively and powerfully does the example of the virtuous operate! How impreſſively does their preſence or their memory act upon us! Wherefore then do we not ſeek out ſuch good perſons, ſuch chriſtians? Why do we not form more intimate attachments with them? Why do we not prefer their converſation and their company to the converſation and the company of the wicked or the thoughtleſs? Why do we not borrow light and intellectual energies from them? Are not we alone to blame if we are deſtitute of their aſſiſtance, and ought we to be ſurpriſed if among cold, inſenſible perſons we become inſenſible alſo, that our ardour in goodneſs is ſo ſoon extinguiſhed, and if inſtead of the aſſiſtance we are in want of, we find on all ſides obſtacles and oppoſition? — And the aſſiſtance of God? How expreſsly are we promiſed it by Jeſus! "Aſk," ſays he, "and ye ſhall receive, ſeek, and ye ſhall find, knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you. If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more ſhall your heavenly father give the holy ſpirit to them that aſk him?"

him?" — "If any of you lack wiſdom, let him aſk of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it ſhall be given him." And what a powerful aſſiſtance is this! "If God be for us, who ſhall be againſt us?" "His ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs." We can overcome, we can do all things through Chriſt who ſtrengtheneth us. — What aſſiſtance laſtly do not outward circumſtances and reſources offer us to virtue and godlineſs! How much may not ſometimes the reading of a truly excellent book, how much the keeping away from particular ſocieties, perſons, engagements, how much a ſhorter or longer reſidence in the country, or a temporary ſilence and retirement, how greatly may not all this contribute to reſtore ſerenity to our mind, to open our heart to the influence of the doctrines of wiſdom and religion, inſpire us with new ſpiritual life, enable us to get the better of ſome violent paſſion, heighten our taſte for purer, nobler delights, for rational exerciſes of devotion, and therefore alleviate our progreſs on the path of duty and virtue! How do we act when our bodily ſtrength is exhauſted, when we are in want of recreation and refreſhment? Do we continue to proceed in the uſual round of weariſome occupations, of tumultuous pleaſures and diverſions, of coercion and reſtraint? Do we not ſeek more reſt, quiet, retirement, gentler amuſements, more liberty, more ſelf-ſatisfaction? Why do we not act in like manner when our mind becomes drowſy, when we are beginning

beginning to grow languid in goodneſs, when our ſpiritual energies are relaxed and the obſervance of the divine commandments ſeems grievous? Are we not alone to blame if we neglect to facilitate it by the uſe of theſe means?

An affair is fifthly eaſy to us, my devout audience, when we can ſurvey it without much trouble in all its parts and connect them together; if it is not of ſo complicated and intricate a nature, that we muſt be in continual apprehenſion, of falling into miſtakes on one ſide or other; if we meet with no incongruities, have no claſhing intereſts and views to combine in it. This it is that commonly renders the life of the man, who is addicted to vile unruly paſſions, the ſevereſt bondage. Their demands, their intereſts, their views are contradictory: they are very apt to fall out among one another. While their vaſſal is gratifying one, another ſtarts up, and he can never either appeaſe their ravenous cravings or ſatisfy himſelf. This it is likewiſe that very often renders the ſervice of mankind extremely grievous. Their diſpoſitions, their opinions, their views, are variable, their orders are not always conſiſtent. Caprice, conceit, accidental, tranſitory inclinations are too frequently ſubſtituted for ſettled principles, and even theſe are not always the ſame. No wonder, if with the beſt intentions, with the utmoſt zeal to oblige, we cannot give ſatisfaction, and are often puzzled how to act, that we may not give offence. — In the obedience that we owe to God, my pious hearers,

hearers, in the obſervance of his commandments, none of theſe difficulties are found. Here is no variance, no inconſiſtency: here all is fixed, regular and harmonious. Here we have no need to be afraid of defeating our aims on one hand, while we are diligently purſuing them on the other. Here we have not to do with a maſter, who is inclined one way to-day and another to-morrow, iſſues orders to-day, and by other orders to-morrow renders their execution impoſſible. His will is always the ſame, his views are always alike. His laws are no leſs ſimple than unalterable and irrevocable. The love of God and man is the ſum total, the whole contents of his commandments, and both are eſſentially the ſame: complacency in whatever is beautiful and good, delight in perfection and happineſs, and pleaſure and zeal in promoting them as far as our abilities will allow. Yes, to ſerve God, and to ſerve mankind, to love God and to love mankind, is in reality one and the ſame, the ſource and motive of every duty, of every virtue, of every generous ſentiment and action. Open all the avenues of thy heart to this love, o man, ſubmit to be thoroughly pervaded with its fervour, and nothing will be eaſier to thee, nothing more agreeable than to revere and adore the God whom thou loveſt, to ſtand in filial awe of him, to pay him a ready obedience, to truſt him in full aſſurance, to ſubmit to him entirely and to be ſatisfied in all his diſpenſations. Expand thy heart to this love and nothing will be eaſier, nothing more

more agreeable to thee, than to honour and eſteem the perſons whom thou loveſt, to ſerve and aſſiſt them, to act juſtly, reaſonably, kindly, generouſly towards them, to pity them, to be patient and indulgent with them, to take a cordial intereſt in their ſorrows and in their joys, and to provide for their welfare as for thy own. Only when thou ſhutteſt up thy heart againſt this love, that is, when thou neglecteſt the firſt, the greateſt, the chief commandment: only then can the accompliſhment of thy duty, obedience towards God, only then can virtue and godlineſs prove grievous to thee. And what is more natural to man, what is more delightful to him than love? And to whom but himſelf can he impute the want of it, and therefore the want of all ſatisfaction and energy in goodneſs?

An affair is ſixthly eaſy, my pious hearers, when there is not only no incongruity in it, when it is not only in general conſiſtent, but when likewiſe all the parts of it are ſo connected together, that they mutually ſupport, advance, confirm, embelliſh one another, that in the care and diligence we beſtow upon it, we take no ſtep in vain, but approach the object by every one. And is it not thus with the obſervance of the divine commandments, with chriſtian virtue and piety! Which of God's commandments is not a ſupport, incentive, aſſiſtance to ſome other? Which canſt thou keep, from duty and obedience, truly and really keep, without alleviating to thyſelf thereby the obſervance of the reſt? Which of the chriſtian

chriſtian virtues is ſo detached from the others, ſubſiſts ſo entirely alone, as not to need the influence and the concurrence of the reſt, and in return not to lend them vitality and force? How amicably are they not all abſorbed in one another? What faithful and inſeparable companions they are! Which can we practiſe, without at the ſame time rendering ourſelves more willing and dextrous in the practice of the reſt? Are they not all in union? Do they not all lead hand in hand to perfection, to happineſs? Haſt thou ever, my chriſtian brother, haſt thou ever attended the public worſhip, engaged in prayer, or other exerciſes of devotion with underſtanding and ſentiment, without feeling thyſelf enlivened and invigorated to the ſeveral duties of juſtice, of philanthropy, of fidelity in thy ſtation and calling? Haſt thou ever enjoyed the pleaſure of beneficence, of generous, chriſtian beneficence, without feeling ſtronger emotions of love for that God, who has made thee capable of it, and granted thee this pleaſure to enjoy? Haſt thou ever got the maſtery of thyſelf, haſt thou ever with an honeſt and truly chriſtian heart ſacrificed any thing to thy brethren or to the general welfare, without more energetically feeling the nobleneſs, the dignity of human nature, and encountering all the difficulties of ſimilar or other caſes with renovated courage? Haſt thou ever willingly and faithfully fulfilled thy duty, without thence acquiring freſh deſire and ability for the fulfilment of every other duty? Do not therefore all the divine commandments,

ments, all the duties, all the virtues mutually ſupport and advance each other? Canſt thou therefore on the path of chriſtian rectitude ever make one ſtep in vain? Does not every one bring thee nearer to the goal? Muſt not every one make thy progreſs on that path more eaſy to thee? But the more certain the conſequences, the greater and more apparent the utility of any occupation, the more eaſy muſt it always prove to us. We can never earneſtly labour at our correction and amendment without ſucceſs, we can never be diligent in the practice of virtue and piety without the greateſt advantages both in variety and in degree; and the longer we practiſe the one and the other, the more delightful is the conſequence, the richer and greater the benefit we reap from it.

No, contemplating the matter on whatever ſide we will, in itſelf it is not difficult, it is eaſy, it is to the intelligent, to the good man a real ſatisfaction, to keep the divine commandments, to lead a virtuous and godly life. We can never, but by our own fault, be deficient either in knowledge, or in ability, or in motives, or in aſſiſtance and reſources to that purpoſe, we may eaſily take a view of the whole buſineſs; it is conſiſtent in all its parts; all of them reciprocally ſupport and advance each other. Does it notwithſtanding ſtill ſeem grievous to thee, o man, to do that which is lawful and right; doſt thou notwithſtanding deem the divine commandments a heavy yoke and an oppreſſive burden: it is then thine own fault,

fault, by thy erroneous conduct thou makeſt that burdenſome which in itſelf is really light. Indeed if thou wouldſt be virtuous and devout, and yet wilt not uſe the means for becoming ſo, wilt not be vigilant over thyſelf, wilt ſtill avoid ſilent reflection, and live in continual diſſipation; indeed if thou arbitrarily ſeparateſt one virtue from another, if thou wilt keep one commandment and tranſgreſs another, if thou reſolveſt to-day to obey the will of God and tomorrow the cravings of ſenſuality, or the commands of the world; indeed, if thou ſacrifice thy beſt years and abilities to the ſervice of vanity and ſin, if thou ſubmit to be manacled and deprived of thy liberty by vice, and think it time enough to become virtuous and godly when thou art deſcending into the vale of years, with declining faculties, in the moſt unfavourable circumſtances: yes, then it muſt aſſuredly be difficult, then it will perhaps be impoſſible for thee to do it. But is not that thy own fault? Are theſe difficulties implicated in the thing itſelf? Proceed they not entirely from thy erroneous and criminal conduct? Wherefore, my dear friends, let me exhort you never to put aſunder, what God, what the nature of things, have ſo indiſſolubly joined together. Require not to attain the end, without the uſe of all the proper means. Flatter not yourſelves with the fond conceit, that you will reach the prize, unleſs you reſolutely walk the way that leads to it. That the obſervance of the divine commandments may be eaſy to you, obſerve them truly, obſerve them all,

obſerve them with unremitted aſſiduity and conſtant care. And ye who are yet in the bloom of life, in the full vigour of your faculties, are ſtill in poſſeſſion of your native liberty and courage, oh neglect not to profit by theſe propitious circumſtances, devote yourſelves betimes and entirely to virtue and piety, learn to keep the commandments of God, ere ye are intangled in the ſnares of ſin and vice, enter the path of chriſtian integrity, ere ye have fatigued and debilitated yourſelves in the mazes of folly and the devious turnings of iniquity. How eaſy, how agreeable will it then be to you, to walk that path, how much farther will ye proceed on it, to what benefits and felicities will it conduct you both in the preſent and in the future world! Yes, to you the ways of virtue will indeed be ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths be happineſs and peace.

SERMON XXXIX.

To whom, and in what reſpects, the Obſervance of the divine Commandments is and ſeems grievous.

GOD, thou art righteous, thou art eſſential benignity and love; but we have often reaſon to be confounded before thee. Thou leaveſt us in no want of any thing, that can give us pleaſure and ability in goodneſs, that can alleviate the diſcharge of our duty, the obſervance of thy commandments, that can aſſiſt and impel us in our efforts after perfection and happineſs. Nature and religion, internal energies and external reſources; our own experience and that of others combine together for rendering that occupation eaſy and pleaſant to us. And yet we ſo frequently complain of the obſtacles and difficulties that we meet with in it! And yet we proceed ſo tardily on the road of duty and virtue, deviate ſo often from it, and ſo often loſe ſight of the glorious prize to which it leads! O God, how unworthy do we thus render ourſelves of the capacities, the abilities, the ſuperior endowments, which as thy children, as chriſtians, thou haſt vouchſafed us! How unworthy of the glory and felicity to which

thou haſt called us! Who ought to fear thee, to love thee, to obey thee, who ſhould make it his ſupreme delight to be juſt and beneficent, who ſhould ſtrive with unabated ardour after ever purer virtue and devotion, if we ſhould not, whom thou haſt ſo highly favoured, on whom thou haſt beſtowed ſo much light, ſo much ability, ſo many encouragements and incentives to it! And in what manner can we attempt to excuſe ourſelves, how eſcape the moſt condign and heavy puniſhment, if we prize not theſe privileges and employ them not with the utmoſt fidelity! No, thee whom we know as the moſt gracious father, thee we alſo revere as the moſt righteous judge, and if thy grace, thy favour is our life, our perfect happineſs, thy diſpleaſure is death and deſtruction to us. No, nothing can abſolve us from obedience to thy commandments, nothing juſtify our complaints of the difficulty of their obſervance. Oh may we then more and more clearly perceive this truth, more firmly believe it, and henceforth pay thee, not a divided, not a conſtrained and ſervile, but an unbounded, willing, cheerful, childlike obedience! Bleſs then, moſt merciful father, bleſs to the promotion of theſe deſigns our reflections on the doctrines of religion which are now to employ us. Let them diſſipate our prejudices and errors, and inſpire us with freſh appetence and courage for the leading of a truly virtuous and godly life. For theſe mercies we pray thee, as the votaries of thy ſon Jeſus, and addreſs thee farther in his holy name, who upon the croſs perfected

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the character of obedience, and finiſhed the pattern of univerſal goodneſs, for the world to ſtudy, to imitate and to admire. Our father, &c.

I JOHN V. 3.

His commandments are not grievous.

IN one of my former diſcourſes, my devout hearers, I made it my buſineſs to ſhew you the poſſibility and facility of keeping the divine commandments, or of a virtuous and religious life. Or, in other words, we inquired what it is that properly renders an affair, a buſineſs, an undertaking eaſy to us, and diſcovered that it all has place in regard to the obedience which God requires of us, in regard to virtue and piety. We clearly ſaw, that except by our own fault, we cannot be deficient either in a plain and certain knowledge of the will of God and our duty, or in the neceſſary abilities for the accompliſhment thereof. We have the moſt various and cogent motives thereto, and in any eventual obſtacles and difficulties, and under the ſenſe of our own infirmity, we may promiſe ourſelves aſſiſtance from mankind, aſſiſtance from the Almighty, aſſiſtance from a variety of external objects. We may beſides ſurvey at once, without much trouble, all the divine commandments, whatever relates to virtue and piety, as they all ſubſiſt in the moſt beautiful order and harmony. One commandment, one duty, one virtue conſtantly ſupports, advances, alleviates to us the reſt. From

all which we juſtly inferred, that the obſervance of the divine commandments, that a virtuous and godly life in itſelf is not difficult, that to the intelligent and good man it muſt be eaſy and agreeable. This propoſition however, certain and undeniable as it is, ſeems to be at variance, not only with ſome paſſages of holy writ, where the way of virtue is repreſented as toilſome, but alſo with the experience of ſuch numbers of people who pretend it to be extremely difficult, and complain of it accordingly. Theſe difficulties, my devout audience, I mean to encounter in my preſent diſcourſe, and thereby confirm you in the conviction of the truth of the apoſtolical declaration in our text: his commandments are not grievous. To this end, let us in the firſt place ſee, in what caſes and in what reſpects the obſervance of the divine commandments, or a virtuous and godly life may be conſidered as grievous; and then examine ſome of the objections, that are alleged againſt the poſſibility and facility of ſuch a life.

Obſerve firſt, my devout hearers, that the facility of a matter, by no means excludes or removes that earneſtneſs and application and exertion of the faculties which it requires; and no earneſtneſs, no application and exertion of our faculties is grievous, whenever an adequate motive is not wanting, and we are ſure of ſucceſs. The obſervance of the divine commandments cannot indeed be managed without attention, without care. To lead a virtuous and godly life is certainly a grave concern. It is certainly

certainly not enough, that we know and approve the divine commandments; and obſerve ſuch of them as can be moſt reconciled with our appetites and affections, and our preſent outward advantages. It is indeed not enough, that we eſteem and revere virtue and godlineſs, that we adopt their external form, that we occaſionally perform a virtuous act, or that we wiſh, propoſe, attempt to become truly virtuous and devout. No, mere wiſhes, reſolutions, attempts are not here the whole of the buſineſs. Our wiſhes muſt ſet us to work, our reſolutions muſt be executed, our attempts muſt be proſecuted in continued endeavours, in zealous exertions. The good that we know and approve, we muſt actually do, and that at all times, in all places, in all circumſtances. The virtue and godlineſs that we eſteem and revere we muſt really practiſe, we muſt adopt as our own, we muſt take for the rule of our temper and conduct. And this certainly cannot be effected without attention, without earneſtneſs, without the due application and exertion of our faculties. We muſt be ſober, and watchful over all that paſſes within and without us, and may have an influence on our temper and conduct, ſometimes ſeek retirement, frequently call ourſelves to account, exerciſe ourſelves in reflection, not unneceſſarily expoſe ourſelves to temptation, and carefully employ all the reſources which religion and our own experience afford us for our confirmation in goodneſs. But is thereby the obſervance of the divine commandments, the prac-

tice of virtue and piety, impoſſible or grievous to us? Where is then the good, the beautiful, the covetable that may be acquired, without any pains and exertion, by mere wiſhing and willing? Do ye hold then the affairs of your temporal vocation to be impoſſible or grievous, becauſe ye cannot tranſact them without underſtanding and conſideration, becauſe ye muſt uſe diligence and care in them, becauſe they do not allow you to paſs your days in indolence and eaſe? Could ye, without continued attention to yourſelf and the whole of your conduct, acquire the favour of your patrons, of your ſuperiors, the eſteem and affection of your friends, and are you apt to complain of this difficulty, if the favour of theſe perſons is of great conſequence to you, if the eſteem and affection of theſe friends are become neceſſary to you? Do not even the greater part of the entertainments and diverſions which ye enjoy, demand more or leſs ſerious preparations, more or leſs voluntary reſtraints, more or leſs exertion of your faculties, and do ye on that account deem the enjoyment of theſe entertainments and diverſions to be impoſſible, or at leaſt grievous and burdenſome? Why then only in regard to the obſervance of the divine commandments, only in regard to virtue and religion, ſhould that be called difficult, diſcouragingly difficult, which cannot be done without ſerioufneſs and attention, without ſome pains and trouble? Oh if ye did but conſider and treat your moſt important intereſts as you do the leſs important, how much aſhamed would ye be

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of your indolence, how ſoon would thoſe pretended difficulties be put to flight!

Obſerve ſecondly, my pious hearers, that the obſervance of the divine commandments, that a virtuous and godly life cannot be equally eaſy to every one, and even not to the ſame perſon, at all times and in all circumſtances. Properly ſpeaking, any thing is eaſy or difficult only in compariſon with ſome other thing, or to the perſon employed about it. Accordingly, what is heavy to one is light to another, what is difficult to one is eaſy to another; what one perſon ſighs and ſinks under as an oppreſſive burden, is carried by another with his head erect and in a briſk pace. The caſe is the ſame with the obſervance of the divine commandments, with virtue and piety. Only compare the perſon, who not till late in life has entered on the path of chriſtian rectitude, with him who has been walking it from his childhood. How many more rubs, how many more difficulties and obſtacles on it muſt the former meet with than the latter! How much more ſlowly muſt he proceed on it than the latter! The former has perhaps conſumed the greater part of his life in follies and ſins, has thus impaired his faculties, diminiſhed his liberty, ſpoilt his taſte, given his affections a wrong, a perverſe bias, has adopted ſeveral bad habits, and which are become to him as it were a ſecond nature. How hard a matter muſt it be to him to controul himſelf, to reſcue himſelf from the dominion of ſin and of vice, to get rid of his bad habits, to do the reverſe of what he has ſo long been

accuſtomed to do, to give his affections a contrary turn, to ſeek his pleaſure and happineſs in oppoſite things, and thus in a manner to become a new man! How difficult, for inſtance, muſt it prove to him to become humble and meek, if he were before addicted to anger and pride; to act diſintereſtedly and with generoſity, if he has been heretofore governed by ſelf-love and avarice; to live with moderation and temperance, if he has been the ſlave of voluptuouſneſs; to think ſeriouſly and to keep a conſtant guard upon himſelf, if he has hitherto been living thoughtleſsly and licentiouſly; to ſeek retirement and to have a reliſh for rational exerciſes of devotion, if he has formerly been rambling about in perpetual diſſipation and illuſion! Whereas the latter, who has applied betimes to virtue and religion, who began to obſerve the divine commandments as ſoon as he learnt them, what particular difficulties can he find in them! How eaſy muſt it be for him to will and to do, what he has always willed and done, to which all his thoughts, appetites, views, affections are turned, in which he has already had ſo much ſatisfaction, from which he has already reaped ſo much benefit, what is ſo intimately blended with his whole ſyſtem of thought and ſentiment, what is become ſo natural, ſo agreeable to him! Are not however the divine commandments, are not virtue and piety always the ſame? If then they are no leſs difficult to that man, than eaſy to this, ſhould he not impute that difficulty entirely to himſelf? Is it not a neceſſary conſequence of the culpable depravation

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of his faculties, of his late amendment, of his voluntary and long vaſſalage?

Obſerve thirdly, my pious hearers, that the obſervance of the divine commandments, that virtue and piety neither are at all times and in all circumſtances alike eaſy or difficult. There are times of a far extenſive, an almoſt univerſal corruption of manners; times when folly and vice bear ſway, when nearly all authority, all reſpect, all diſtinctions, all dignities, all the ſources of honour and wealth, all the means of ſatisfaction and pleaſure, are in the hands of fools and villains; times when ſemblance effaces reality, levity and wantonneſs all ſerious reflection, faſhion diſcards all principle, ſenſuality obliterates reaſon, when religion gives way to infidelity, or is converted into mere empty forms and ceremonies, when wiſdom and virtue and piety are objects of ſcorn and deriſion: and at ſuch times it is extremely difficult not to be hurried down the ſtream, not to be infected by the faſhion, not to be dazzled by the falſe glare, the faſcinating charms of vice; it is difficult to prefer obſcurity to ſplendour, contumely to honour, mere intrinſic excellence and dignity to all external diſtinctions, to all the pomp and parade of magnificence, to all the flatteries of approbation and praiſe; difficult to walk a path, on which one ſeems ſo ſolitary and forlorn, and which appears to lead away from what elſewhere is called pleaſure, pre-eminence, happineſs. There are likewiſe times of perſecution, when, for the ſake of truth,

truth, for the ſake of conſcience, for the ſake of virtue and godlineſs we run the hazard of loſing our property and poſſeſſions, of being torn from our family, baniſhed from our country, treated as a criminal, condemned to infamous and painful puniſhments; and in ſuch times it is extremely difficult, to continue faithful to truth and to virtue, to ſacrifice all to God and our conſcience, and on the road of the moſt cruel afflictions with courage and joy to ſtrive for the prize of perfection. Such were the times, when chriſtianity was firſt promulgated, and light and darkneſs, virtue and vice, liberty and thraldom were contending for the maſtery. Then might Jeſus juſtly ſay to his contemporaries: Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate, for ſtrait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it: whoſoever will come after me, let him deny himſelf and take up his croſs and follow me: whoſoever he be of you that forſaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my diſciple. — But we, my dear friends, do we truly live in ſuch times? Can we truly make theſe difficulties our plea, if we refuſe to obey the divine commandments? Which of you has been perſecuted on account of truth and integrity? Who has been deprived of his property, or his honours, or poſts, or dignities, or other diſtinctions, ſolely becauſe he fulfilled his duty and followed the dictates of his conſcience? Who has ever had reaſon to be aſhamed of virtue and piety, or to repent of their ſervice? Let the corruption

ruption of manners be never ſo great, let infidelity vaunt ever ſo much of the multitude and the rank of its adherents, yet virtue, integrity, the rational worſhip of the deity, unfeigned devotion, are always in general repute, never exclude any one from the road to temporal proſperity and to worldly honours, they are ſtill in moſt caſes far ſurer means of procuring us laſting eſteem, and of promoting and eſtabliſhing our welfare, than all the artifices and outrages of vice.

We obſerve fourthly, my pious hearers, that there are unqueſtionably particular duties and virtues, which appear to be more difficult than others, and which actually are ſo to ſome perſons, though never without their own fault. It is indeed in particular caſes difficult to govern oneſelf, to controul paſſions that have once acquired ſtrength, to throw off illegitimate connections in which we have long lived, no longer to comply with ſinful luſts and paſſions, which we have frequently indulged. But is not this difficulty your own work, ye who complain of it? Did ye not know the worth of your liberty and the impetuoſity of the paſſions? Were ye not previouſly ſenſible, that thoſe connections were unlawful, that theſe luſts and pleaſures were ſinful? Why then did ye ſuffer ſenſuality to govern you? Why did ye not ſtrenuouſly reſiſt thoſe paſſions, when firſt they began to ſtir within you? Why did ye not break thoſe bonds ere they made you faſt? Why did ye not renounce thoſe luſts, thoſe pleaſures ere they became

came in a manner neceſſary to you? Have ye any right to complain, if it now coſts ye the greateſt pains, the utmoſt exertion, to accompliſh, what formerly ye might have done with the greateſt facility? It ſeems difficult, and it really is ſo to numbers of people, when under the preſſure of extraordinary and continued afflictions, to be patient, reſolute, not diſcouraged in the diſcharge of what duty requires, ſtedfaſt in hope, immoveable in faith. It undoubtedly requires a virtue of no ordinary ſtamp to ſtand firm under ſuch trials, and to be found faithful in the end. But then is the virtue of the chriſtian, who is ſuch in deed and in truth, a vulgar, an ordinary virtue? Has not the chriſtian, as ſuch, extraordinary energies, capacitating him for extraordinary virtues, and for rendering the practice of them poſſible and eaſy to him? How ſeldom beſides does it happen that the Almighty, who knows our infirmity, impoſes on us ſuch trials! And how powerful is the aſſiſtance which he grants us on thoſe occaſions, if our heart is but whole with him! — — It ſeems laſtly difficult, and to numbers it actually is ſo, to forgive an adverſary, to love an enemy, to ſuppreſs every emotion of hatred, all thoughts of malice and animoſity againſt them, and to be reconciled with them from the bottom of the heart. But to whom does this commandment, this duty, appear, to whom is it really difficult? Only to thoſe who are contented with a divided obedience to the divine commandments, who think themſelves

virtuous and devout, and yet are deſtitute both of the love of God and man. Only to thoſe who obſerve the precepts of chriſtianity, but will not ſubmit to be animated and governed by its temper and ſpirit. Only to thoſe who call themſelves chriſtians, and yet ſuffer themſelves to be governed by vanity and pride. No, to the chriſtian, who juſtly bears that title, it is not more difficult to be reconciled with his enemy, than to remain true to his friend, not more difficult to forgive his adverſary, than to do good to the poor and needy. He has the ſame reaſon and motive for the one as for the other, and enjoys in both the ſame generous, the ſame divine ſatisfaction.

To conclude, we muſt alſo obſerve this, my pious hearers. There is a certain, though not criminal, yet very defective method of practiſing virtue and devotion, which renders the buſineſs far more difficult to a man, than in its own nature it is, and than with the avoidance of this defect, it would be to him. There are namely perſons, who from want of knowledge, from prejudices of education and inſtruction, or from a natural diſpoſition to heavineſs and auſterity, imagine virtue and godlineſs to have a gloomy aſpect, fancy them enemies to all kinds of amuſement, to every ſpecies of pleaſure and mirth, deny themſelves therefore a thouſand ſatisfactions which God has nowhere forbidden, take upon themſelves a thouſand burdens, which he has nowhere ordered them to take up; perſons who perform every duty with anxiety, enjoy every harmleſs gratification with

with fear and trembling, impute to themſelves every unintentional error as a crime, lay themſelves under the ſevereſt regimen in regard to the moſt indifferent objects, impoſe a burdenſome reſtraint on all their thoughts and feelings, words and works, regulate themſelves in all reſpects abſolutely by ſome particular arbitrary form, and fancy themſelves never better and more godly, than when they do extraordinary violence to themſelves, are entirely abſorbed in their own conceits, and are become almoſt totally inſenſible to all external objects. Such perſons may doubtleſs be very ſincere in their intentions, they may be really virtuous and godly, and will even hereafter not fail of receiving the recompences of virtue and godlineſs, ſo far as they are capable of them. But that the performance of their duty, that the obſervance of the divine commandments proves ſo grievous to them, is entirely their own fault. They themſelves have ſtrewn the path on which they walk with thorns and briars, and ſtones of ſtumbling and rocks of offence. They have been miſtaken in the choice of their guides on it, and take for the demands of virtue and godlineſs, what they have been incited to by error, prejudice, a feeble, timid, ſervile temper, an unhappy turn of mind, or a ruined ſtate of health. Far be it therefore from us, to judge of the facility or the difficulty of keeping the divine commandments by the conduct of thoſe who keep them! No, the obſervance of them is not only in itſelf, but likewiſe in moſt caſes

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and circumſtances, where it is held to be particularly difficult, really eaſy, and wherever it is not ſo, it is not ſo by the fault of the individual.

Let us now however liſten to the principal objections, that are brought againſt the poſſibility and the facility of a virtuous and godly life, and examine their validity.

How frail, it is frequently ſaid, how corrupt is human nature. What is to be expected from a creature ſo frail, ſo corrupt as man! How can it be required of him that he ſhould keep all the divine commandments, that he ſhould lead a uniformly virtuous and godly life. But is then this frailty, this corruption of human nature actually ſo great as thou pretendeſt, o thou who makeſt it thy excuſe? Has man then ever ceaſed to be an intelligent, rational, free, moral agent? Is then infirmity and total imbecility one and the ſame? Can he then do nothing at all, becauſe he is not able to do every thing? Does then the ſame corruption that antiently reigned among the jews and heathens, and which the apoſtle juſtly deſcribes as extremely great and general, prevail alſo without exception and without bounds among chriſtians? Has not chriſtianity diffuſed a new ſpiritual life among mankind, and imparted to them new energies to goodneſs? And haſt thou then faithfully employed the abilities which thou poſſeſſeſt both as a man and as a chriſtian, thou who art complaining of the want of it? Haſt thou ever tried, by continued unrelaxing endeavours and exer-

tions, what thou art able or not to perform with them? Haſt thou ever done in regard to thy amendment, in regard to virtue and godlineſs, what thou art in the daily habit of doing in regard to the affairs of thy calling, to the advancement of thy outward welfare, to procure thee honour and eſteem among mankind? Canſt thou in this reſpect diſtinguiſh ſemblance from reality, good from bad, right from wrong, and juſtly chuſe between them, why then ſhouldſt thou not be able to do ſo likewiſe in reſpect to the former? Canſt thou in regard to worldly concerns and affairs be attentive, diligent, wary, reſolute, indefatigable, undergo a variety of troubles, forego many pleaſures and advantages, ſubmit to various reſtrictions, why ſhouldſt thou therefore not likewiſe be able to be and to do all this in regard to ſpiritual and everlaſting concerns? No, do but employ all the faculties that thou haſt, employ all the means that are offered thee by God, for conquering thine infirmity and thy corruption, employ them faithfully, and rely withal on him who has promiſed to ſtrengthen thee in the faithful employment of thy faculties, ſo wilt thou moſt aſſuredly ſoon experimentally know, that human nature, notwithſtanding its infirmity and limitations, and notwithſtanding the corruption that ſubſiſts among mankind, is the work of God, in which he has placed great endowments, great capacities and powers, that he has deſigned and qualified it for great achievements.

What

What ſway, it is farther frequently ſaid, what tyrannical ſway does not temperament exerciſe over the man! How ſoon it overpowers his reaſon! How quickly it defeats his beſt intentions! Who is able to reſiſt it? If I have an unfortunate propenſity to one or another kind of bad and forbidden things, if I am diſpoſed to violence, to anger, to voluptuouſneſs, how ſhall I reſtrain this propenſity? How temper my natural impetuoſity? How comply with the rules of temperance and chaſtity? How thou ſhouldſt do ſo, o man? Juſt as thou often really doſt, and for far leſs momentous reaſons than thoſe which religion produces. How frequently haſt thou the addreſs to reſiſt thy propenſity, to controul thy paſſions, and to do preciſely the reverſe of that to which thy temperament incites thee! It may be perhaps ſome advantage in thy trade, in thy commerce, which impells thee to this dexterity. How often mayſt thou have dealings with perſons, whoſe way of thinking and acting is extremely abhorrent to thine, who ſay many things to thee which otherwiſe thou wouldſt not patiently hear from any one, which ſometimes ſting thee to the quick. They ſeem not to believe thee on thy word, they accuſe thee perhaps of groſs miſconduct, pay little regard to thy reaſonable propoſitions, to thy ſolemn aſſeverations, and in general are greatly wanting in that reſpect which is thy due. — And yet thou keepeſt thy temper, yet thou art perfectly calm, yet thou haſt the art of ſuppreſſing every emotion of diſpleaſure,

ſure, of anger, of deteſtation. Why then ſhouldſt thou not likewiſe be able to act thus at other times, on other occaſions, in the boſom of thy family, towards thy inferiors and dependants, if thou hadſt deeply imprinted it on thy mind, that it was equally right, equally proper, equally neceſſary and beneficial in one caſe as in the other? — Suppoſe thou art in company. How many things ſeeſt thou or heareſt thou there, that are exceedingly offenſive to thee, which would at other times and in other places call up thy indignation and reſentment! Thou accidentally meeteſt there thy adverſary, thine enemy, on whom thou wouldſt fain take immediate revenge! How often are thy ſenſual appetites rouzed, or the flame of illicit love excited in thy breaſt! But the laws of propriety and decorum allow thee neither to indulge the thirſt of vengeance, nor thy propenſity to voluptuouſneſs. Thou therefore layeſt a reſtraint on thyſelf, thou anſwereſt the indiſcreet with diſcretion, amicably holdeſt out thy hand to thine adverſary, thine enemy, and ſtrictly obſerveſt the rules of politeneſs. And why ſhouldſt thou not be able to do ſo on other occaſions? Ought not the fear of God, the love of God, if thou wert actuated at all by them, operate as powerfully upon thee, as mere propriety, as the dread of the cenſure of the world? No, what is poſſible and eaſy to thee in one caſe, muſt likewiſe be poſſible and eaſy to thee in the other, if thou art ſincerely determined on it. No, none of thy propenſities are ſo headſtrong, as not

to

to be weakened and controuled by continued diſcipline, no conſtitution is ſo frail and ſo violent as not to be corrected and tamed by vigilance and prayer, by virtue and religion.

How various, it is thirdly ſaid, how faſcinating, how irreſiſtible are the temptations to evil, with which we are environed on all ſides! How great the force of example! What ſplendour, what ſucceſs, what delights very frequently attend the vicious! How difficult not to be drawn aſide from the path of duty and virtue either by perſuaſions and intreaties, or by promiſes, or by threats, or by praiſe or blame! How difficult to be ſo often tempted and yet never to be ſeduced! But canſt thou not if thou wilt avoid the generality of theſe temptations? Canſt thou not arm thyſelf againſt thoſe that are inevitable, by prayer and meditation? If thou art aware that this or that company, the reading of this or that book, the converſation of this or that perſon is dangerous to thee, why doſt thou not forſake that company? Why ſhunneſt thou not the converſation of thoſe perſons? Why doſt thou not abſolutely refrain from reading that book? Wouldſt thou purpoſely and without neceſſity viſit places where contagious diſtempers rage, or aſſociate with perſons and meddle with things infected with the plague? And if thou canſt forbear to do this from a regard to the health of thy body, why ſhouldſt thou not be able to avoid the former from a concern for the innocence of thy heart, for the perfec-

tion of thy ſpirit? And if thou canſt not abſolutely avoid it, why not guard thyſelf againſt it, as thou art wont to guard thyſelf in ſimilar caſes againſt external evils? When thou art tempted by bad example, why not contraſt it with the force of good example? When thou art allured by outward ſhow, or the deceitful charms of ſucceſsful vice, why not compare with them its dreadful end, the deſtructive, fatal conſequences, with which ſooner or later it cannot fail of being attended? When thou art provoked at the praiſe or the cenſure of fools, why not ſet againſt it the rewarding approbation or the excruciating reproaches of thy own conſcience and of all good men, why not the complacency or the diſpleaſure of thy God, the lord and judge of the world! And can that virtue be deſerving of the name, which is unable to withſtand any temptation? And have not thouſands and thouſands of perſons, who were men like thee, been victorious over temptations in compariſon whereof, thoſe to which thou appealeſt are of no account whatever? Be aſſured that to the chriſtian no temptations are inſuperable, to him they are only exerciſes in goodneſs, opportunities and incentives to exert his faculties and to evince his integrity; and whoever ſuffers himſelf to be carried away by them under the pretext that they are invincible, is a coward, a mean puſillanimous being, who ſcarcely knows anything of virtue except the name and is entirely deſtitute of the ſpirit of chriſtianity.

But,

But, it is laſtly often ſaid, how can it be ſo eaſy a matter to lead a virtuous and godly life, ſince my amendment proceeds ſo ſlowly, ſince with the beſt intentions I am ſo prone to relapſe into my former ſins, ſo often do that which I would not, ſo frequently neglect that which I had purpoſed to do? Is then the reaſon of thy tardy progreſs on the path of virtue, and thy frequent backſlidings into ſin, implicated in the nature of the caſe, or does it lie in thy former and preſent erroneous conduct? Haſt thou long deferred thine amendment, haſt thou greatly enervated thy faculties in the ſervice of ſin and vice; then indeed, as we before obſerved, thy moſt ſincere endeavours cannot produce ſuch ſudden and happy effects, as they would, if thou hadſt never forſaken the path of virtue, or hadſt returned to it earlier. But to whom beſides thyſelf canſt thou impute the blame? And whence comes it in general that even now thy good purpoſes are ſo badly executed? Unqueſtionably becauſe thou generally contenteſt thyſelf with the purpoſe alone, art afraid of any laborious exertion of thy faculties, art not ſufficiently vigilant over thyſelf, employeſt thyſelf not frequently nor ſeriouſly enough in meditation, in prayer, in other exerciſes of devotion, doſt not combat and ſuppreſs the firſt irregular motions of thy heart, art not careful enough to follow the ſuggeſtions and admonitions of thy conſcience, and too often loſeſt ſight of God and the true end of thy being and the future life. — Avoid theſe faults, collect and exert

thy faculties, purſue the buſineſs of thy improvement with the utmoſt intenſity of thy mind, let not any obſtacle and any difficulty deter thee from it, let the ſentiment of God, the example of Jeſus and the proſpects of the future world accompany thee on all occaſions; ſo wilt thou aſſuredly walk with firmer pace along the path of chriſtian rectitude, much ſeldomer ſtumble, and no longer fall, an learn from thy own experience, that the divine commandments are not grievous.

Yes, my dear friends, this is and will for ever remain an inconteſtible truth: God's commandments are not grievous: it is not only poſſible, it is eaſy to keep them and to lead a truly virtuous and godly life! Yes, the commandments of our God and father in heaven merit our moſt willing and cheerful obedience, and this obedience we can and ſhall aſſuredly pay them, if we do but ſeriouſly reſolve upon it! Oh may this truth be always preſent and always certain to us, may it be undeniably proved and loudly proclaimed by the whole of our future lives!

SERMON XL.

The Folly of a ſinful Courſe of Life.

GOD, affectionate, merciful father, everywhere may we hear thy voice, the voice of the moſt benign and gracious parent: within us, without us, in thy works, in thy word — everywhere cautions againſt ſin and corruption, excitements to duty and to virtue, calls to happineſs. — No, none of us can fall unadmoniſhed into ſin and miſery, none but by their own fault miſtake the path of wiſdom! — But how often, o merciful father, how often do we miſtake, how often diſdain to hear thy voice! How often do we harden our hearts againſt thy admonitions, and reſiſt thy call to happineſs! For ſtill we are not wiſe nor virtuous, nor happy, or at leaſt are not ſo to that degree, as we might and ought to be! Ah, we are ſtill deluded by the wiles of ſin, ſtill is the voice of our reaſon and our conſcience drowned by the clamour of our luſts and paſſions. Still are we too ſenſual, too diſtracted, too reſtleſs — engage too ſeldom in ſilent meditation for admitting and attending to the doctrines of wiſdom, the ſuggeſtions of thy holy ſpirit. And thus are we ever ruſhing from one deviation into another, retreating ever farther from thee and from happineſs, and expoſing

ourſelves to the danger of becoming completely miſerable both in the preſent and in the future world! Ah ſpare us ſtill, great God of mercy, in pity ſpare thy wandering progeny, ſave us from the dreadful illuſions into which we are ſo liable to fall! Send out thy light, the effulgence of eternal truth, to guide our ſteps into the way of peace, to diſpel the miſts of ignorance and error from before our eyes, to diſſolve the charms of ſin and vice, to bring us to reflection and ſtop us ſhort on the carreer of perdition. Teach us ſo ſenſibly and convincingly to perceive the folly of a ſinful, an unchriſtian life that we may ſtand aſhamed and confounded at it, that we may be moved to the firm reſolution of altering and correcting our conduct, that we may regulate it entirely henceforth and for ever by the precepts of wiſdom. Bleſs in this reſpect, o God, bleſs in an abundant meaſure the doctrines of truth, in the conſideration whereof we are now to be employed. Cauſe their ſacred efficacy to be powerful in us all, and hearken to the prayer of thy ſuppliants through Jeſus Chriſt, in whoſe name we farther call upon thee, ſaying as he taught us: Our father, &c.

PROV. ix. 6.

Forſake the fooliſh, and live; and go in the way of underſtanding.

WE need not be very great proficients in the ſtudy of mankind, for having remarked that the generality of people make leſs account of being accuſed of a defect in moral excellence, in virtue and integrity,

integrity, than of any deficiency or weakneſs of underſtanding; that they had rather paſs for ſinners than for fools; that they commonly ſet a greater value on the qualities of the mind, than on thoſe of the heart. An irregular, unchriſtian, licentious life appears leſs ſhocking and deſpicable, than ſimplicity and a ſlighter intellect. It is but too frequently ſeen, that a man had rather deceive than be deceived, rather do an injury than ſuffer an injury from others without revenge, rather over-reach and ſupplant his neighbour than be over-reached and ſupplanted by him; had rather be charged with culpable, but ſharp-ſighted ſuſpicion, with exceſſive, but ever watchful diſtruſt, than with plain, downright and eaſily cheated honeſty. It is not my intention at preſent to explore the ſource of this way of thinking, which cannot poſſibly be good, or to point out what a deeply ſeated, predominant corruption it implies among mankind, and how diametrically oppoſite it is to the ſpirit of chriſtianity. I ſhall only juſt obſerve, that by this way of thinking we ſeparate things which in their very nature belong to one another and are always together. Every defect of virtue and integrity ſuppoſes a defect or weakneſs of underſtanding, every irregularity in life ſuppoſes irregularity in thinking, every depravity of heart infirmity of mind, every wicked action implies error. To ſin and to act fooliſhly is one and the ſame thing. A ſinner, an obſtinate, hardened ſinner and yet not a fool, is an abſolute impoſſibility. Folly miſleads to

ſin

ſin and ſin miſleads to folly. Both are at once cauſe and effect, both lead the man whom they have manacled with equal paces continually nearer to wretchedneſs and repentance. And this it is of which I would this day convince you, my dear audience, to-day that I would recall you from the ways of ſin and rouze you to amendment.

Holy ſcripture throughout, and therefore in our text, repreſents the way of ſin as the way of folly, and thoſe who walk it as fooliſh, ſilly people, as perſons who in any other caſe would themſelves condemn what they conceive and do as folly and abſurdity. It expreſſes the greateſt aſtoniſhment, that intelligent beings, or beings endowed with underſtanding, ſhould act ſo irrationally and ſo long continue this irrational manner of acting. Forſake, ſays wiſdom in our text to ſinners, forſake the fooliſh, and go in the way of underſtanding. It is certainly an addreſs, which in our language and in our refined, but not therefore excellent, ſtate of manners, ſounds rather rough. Here however our buſineſs is ſolely with truth and not with the ſtyle in which ſhe ſpeaks to us. Let us therefore hearken to her voice, even though it ſhould ſeem grating and offenſive. Let us at leaſt for once examine, whether we are acting wiſely or fooliſhly, prudently or ſillily, in leading a ſinful, a vicious courſe of life.

The deciſion of this queſtion cannot methinks prove difficult to any one capable of only a moderate degree of reflection. Only have a care in this inquiry

quiry not to confine the idea of the ſinful, vicious life which we pronounce to be folly, too narrowly. Think not that none but the murderer, the adulterer, the robber, the ſcorner and deſpiſer of religion, the groſs tranſgreſſor, can be arraigned of ſuch a life. No, while we ſubmit to be governed by any vile paſſion, be it either pride or envy, or hatred or avarice, or voluptuouſneſs or vanity; ſo long as we purpoſely, wittingly and wilfully harbour only one ſin, or one ſpecies of ſins; ſo long as our appetites and affections are chiefly directed to extrinſic, ſenſual, wordly objects, and not turned on God, on virtue and rectitude, on intrinſic perfection, as long as we delight more in pleaſing man than God, in doing the will of the world and the fleſh than the will of God, in becoming great and rich than wiſe and good, in living freely and wantonly than harmleſs and holy; as long as we make not the commandments of God and the example of Jeſus the ſole rule of our conduct: ſo long we lead a ſinful, unchriſtian, vicious life, however honeſt and inoffenſive it may otherwiſe be. And he who lives in this manner, thinks, judges, acts fooliſhly; his life is in continual oppoſition to ſound reaſon, let him be in other reſpects as intelligent, as ſagacious, as diſcreet as he will. And this we ſhall now proceed more at large to evince by arguments which every one muſt admit to be juſt.

It is in the firſt place a proof of a weak, crazy intellect, it is unqueſtionably folly, to take objects, the real

real nature whereof we may at every inſtant experience, not for what they are, but for ſomewhat entirely different. Who would heſitate to pronounce him ſilly, who ſhould take the running ſtream for a ſolid body, the air for an impenetrable maſs of matter, an earthen veſſel to be infrangible, ſulphur for an uninflammable ſubſtance and the like? —But is the judgment, which the man who leads a ſinful, unchriſtian life, paſſes on the moſt important objects leſs perverſe, leſs abſurd? Does he hold God, religion, virtue, vice, piety, ſenſuality, the preſent, the future, himſelf and his fellow-creatures for that which they ſeverally are, and for which every intelligent, reflecting perſon, not blinded by ſordid luſts and paſſions, muſt recognize them? Ah, my friends, God, who is pure love, whoſe dominion is eſſential grace, the idea of whom is life and felicity to every intelligent mind, is to the ſinner an auſtere ruler, a harſh maſter, a terrible judge, to whom he pays only a forced, a ſlaviſh obedience, the ſentiment of whom rather confounds than gladdens him, from whom he would fain be concealed, from whoſe inſpection in many, many hours and moments of his life he would fain withdraw. God, who is ſo highly exalted above everything that enters into the notion of imperfection and weakneſs, who is eſſential truth, holineſs and juſtice, is but too frequently in the eyes of the ſinner a limited, capricious, fallible being, who is to be appeaſed by external homages and humiliations, deceived by a particular ſemblance of devotion,

votion, or propitiated by bodily penance, by gifts and offerings. Thus does he hold his father, the moſt benign and gracious of fathers, for his enemy and the moſt perfect being for a feeble creature like himſelf. — Religion, that bleſſed band of connexion between God and man, that pure, exuberant ſource of light and conſolation, is to him a yoke that he bears with reluctance, and which he would willingly ſhake off. Virtue, that friend, that giver of every guiltleſs and ſincere delight, that faithful conductreſs through all the labyrinths of life, is to him an auſtere exactreſs, a cruel diſturber of all ſatisfaction and pleaſure. Vice, that diſgrace to humanity, that peſtilential ſource of grief and diſtreſs, of bondage, of death and deſtruction, is to him, in whatever form and under whatever name it ſways him, the full uſe of his liberty, the undiſturbed enjoyment of life, the road to happineſs. Devotion, which diffuſes a living light around mankind, cauſes them to glow with the ſublimeſt ſenſations, unfolds to them the ſparkling portals of the celeſtial city, and gives them by anticipation to feel what they may and will hereafter be in a ſuperior ſtate, is to him enthuſiaſm and ſuperſtition. The pleaſures of ſenſe, on the other hand, which ſhould only be means to higher ends, and whenever they are not, infallibly terminate in remorſe and miſery, are to him the ultimate aim of his efforts, the compendium of human happineſs. And muſt he not very often, to judge from his behaviour, miſtake the tranſitory for the

the intranſitory, his frail and deciduous body for indeſtructible or reckon his immortal ſpirit to be as deciduous and mortal as his body, the preſent, which laſts but a ſhort time, as of more conſequence than the future, which endures for ever, and himſelf as much better and worthier than his fellow-creatures, his brethren and ſiſters? But can we call a man, who thus thinks and judges concerning the moſt momentous objects, intelligent, can we call him wiſe? Do we wrong him, if we place him in the claſs of fools?

It is farther folly, if we prefer the bad to the good, the worſe to the better, poiſon to wholeſome food, death to life. And what do ye elſe, you, who ſtill lead an unchriſtian, ſinful life, who prefer iniquity to righteouſneſs, vice to virtue, thraldom to liberty, the pleaſures of ſenſe to the pleaſures of the mind, the applauſe of the world to the teſtimony of a good conſcience, the honour which is of men to the good pleaſure of God, outward decency to inward perfection, the delights of the world to a happineſs that will never end? Can the wiſe man, when called upon to chuſe between ſuch objects, heſitate one inſtant in forming his reſolution, which he ſhould prefer to the other? Ye chuſe indeed that, which at the time to you ſeems the beſt. But have ye firſt ſeriouſly reflected on it? Do ye conſult reaſon and conſcience on the occaſion? Do ye carefully ſet theſe objects againſt one another? Do ye compare the preſent with the future? Do ye chuſe that which

which will profit and ſolace you not only at preſent, but alſo in the future life? Do ye chuſe ſo as that ye need not be afraid that ye will ever repent of your choice? The wiſe do ſo, and whoever does not, whoever merely follows his propenſity at the time, is decided ſolely by his luſts and appetites, and looks only to what now, at this moment, at this hour, on this day he thinks agreeable or diſagreeable, profitable or noxious, is a fool, he acts like a ſhort-ſighted, crazy perſon who is ſwayed more by ſenſual, animal inſtinct than rational conſideration, is incapable of diſtinguiſhing between ſemblance and reality, of extending his view beyond the preſent moment and of comprehending little or nothing with his mental faculties.

It is thirdly a proof of a weak underſtanding, it is folly, to live in the world without ſome certain, definite purpoſe, to have adopted no juſt and ſolid principles, by which we are regulated in the whole of our conduct, but to ſubmit to be governed and driven to and fro merely by caſual, precarious objects. And can ye be acquitted of this folly, ſuch of you as are ſtill in vaſſalage to ſin and vice, ye who have not yet the true chriſtian temper and lead not a chriſtian life? Have ye ever once ſeriouſly reflected on the proper end of your terreſtrial exiſtence, on the deſign of your capacities and faculties? Do you know, do you conſider, to what purpoſe you are placed here, for what prize you are contending, how you may be ſure of reaching the goal? Is

it decided and proved in your mind, that ye are not your own, but God's, that you are not to uſe the talents, the property, the time, the faculties, that he has committed to you, according to your fancy, but according to his will, that ye are not formed ſolely for this, but for a better world, that the preſent life is in the cloſeſt connection with the future life, that ye are not here for the ſake of gratifying your luſts, or for becoming rich and great and powerful, but intelligent, wiſe, virtuous, in order to qualify yourſelves by wiſdom and virtue for fellowſhip with God and Jeſus Chriſt, and thus to lay the foundation of an everlaſting continually progreſſive perfection and happineſs? Are ſuch the principles on which you regulate the whole of your conduct? Is this the object which ye have perpetually before your eyes, to which ye are always ſtriving to be advancing nearer? Then indeed you would be wiſe, wiſe unto ſalvation! But if ye ramble abroad in the world without conſideration, without reflection, not rightly knowing what ye would have and what not, inclined now this way, now that, to-day think thus, to-morrow otherwiſe, to-day hold religion and virtue and the world to come for objects of the higheſt importance, and to-morrow entirely loſe ſight of them or even make them the ſubjects of ſcorn and deriſion, is that to be intelligent and wiſe? — or if ye would connect conflicting purpoſes, act upon principles diametrically oppoſite, if ye would at the ſame time fulfil the will of God and the will of your luſts

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and paſſions, ſquare your conduct by the prevailing faſhion of the world, by the manners and cuſtoms of the great unthinking multitude and at the ſame time by the temper and example of Jeſus Chriſt, enjoy at the ſame time the furious, wanton revelry of a licentious, diſſolute life, and the pure, calm pleaſures of innocence and virtue, if ye would thus unite righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs, light with darkneſs, or in regard to your moſt important concerns remain always undecided, irreſolute, or if your reſolutions and exertions depend ſolely on the outward circumſtances in which you happen to be at the time, on the company you are with at this moment or the next, on what you ſee and hear at this time or at that, on the book that you are reading, on the tranſaction you are engaged in, and then change again as all theſe objects change, as if the ſtandard of morality were uncertain and variable, how can ye pretend in the ſlighteſt degree to the reputation of being intelligent and wiſe! How can ye be ſurpriſed if the wiſdom in our text ſhould ſay to you: How long, ye ſimple ones, will ye love ſimplicity?

It is fourthly a defect of underſtanding, it is no doubt folly, to propoſe certain ends and views, vehemently to long for their promotion and attainment, and yet not to employ or but ſeldom and negligently to employ the means conducive thereto. One end we have all of us in view; which we all wiſh to attain: and that is happineſs. To be happy, is the wiſh both of the ſinner and the ſaint, of the vicious and the virtuous. But which of the two em-

ploys the proper, the beſt means to attain it? Which of the two, think ye, deſerves in this reſpect the epithet of wiſe? The ſinner, who ſeeks his happineſs without him and therefore makes it to depend on numberleſs objects that are not in his power, which he cannot obtain or not preſerve; or the votary of virtue, who ſeeks it in himſelf, in that which is himſelf, in the qualities that adorn his mind and his heart, and which nothing can raviſh from him? Which of the two will moſt certainly reach his aim, moſt completely aſſuage his thirſt for happineſs, the ſinner, who is in queſt of mere ſenſual, groveling, evaneſcent pleaſures, the ſources whereof are preſently exhauſted, the memory whereof is generally bitter and diſgraceful, the enjoyment whereof ſo often and ſo ſoon ends in pain and diſquietude; or the virtuous man, who places his ſatisfaction in the knowledge of truth, in juſtice and beneficence, in the advancement of his ſpiritual perfection, in having fellowſhip with God and with Jeſus Chriſt, in the bliſsful proſpect of a better world, delights which are never attended either by repentance or ſurfeit, and which are no leſs inexhauſtible than pure? Which of the two in the proſecution of his aim goes more ſurely to work, may more aſſuredly promiſe himſelf the attainment of it, the ſinner, who places his hope and his confidence on mere tranſitory, deciduous objects, which to-day are, and to-morrow ceaſe to be, which to-day he may enjoy and to-morrow can no longer poſſeſs; or the good man, who places them on God, the Eternal and Immutable, whoſe grace and favour

are

are a never failing fount of life and felicity? The ſinner, who lives and is happy only in the preſent, which paſſes away like a dream, and with it loſes his all, becauſe he has no taſte for ſatisfactions of a ſuperior caſt; or the good man, who indeed likewiſe enjoys the viſible and the preſent with prudent moderation, but at the ſame time is laying up treaſures for futurity, and capacitating himſelf by faith and virtue for heavenly, divine ſatisfactions? Which of the two in ſhort is even at preſent more contented and pleaſed, the ſinner who gratifies his paſſions and in the moment while he gratifies them fondly imagines that he has all he could wiſh, but afterwards ſooner or later is perſecuted by the ſentiment of his worn out faculties, of his bartered innocence, of his accumulated guilt, by ſhame and confuſion, by diſguſt and reproaches; or the good man, who controuls himſelf, is maſter of his temper, and then at all times, even in eternity, finds in the remembrance of his conqueſt, in the ſentiment of his force and his dignity the moſt glorious reward of his fidelity? Who does not ſee from this compariſon, that the good man alone acts the part of a ſage, and as ſuch with ſurer ſteps advances towards his mark, and that the ſinner, the man who thinks and lives unlike a chriſtian, is a fool, who muſt neceſſarily fail of his end, becauſe he takes ſuch a courſe for reaching it, as always carries him farther from it?

It is fifthly a proof of a weak, a crazy intellect, it is manifeſt folly, to employ great powers, for pro-

ducing trivial effects, to treat trifles with extreme ſeriouſneſs, and important matters with levity. Thus to the child and to the imbecillity of ſecond childhood toys and puppetſhows are all in all, and nothing, even though it concerned the final cataſtrophe of his own life, or the downfall of nations, comes into any the ſlighteſt conſideration with him. And can you be acquitted of this folly, ye who lead an unchriſtian life, whó are entirely carnal, and earthly minded? What means do ye neglect for relieving your corporeal wants and ſupplying the demands of your ſtation, for pampering your body and decking it in coſtly attire, for increaſing your property, for accumulating treaſures for yourſelf and your family, for acquiring or maintaining a certain conſequence in ſociety, for carrying to effect ſome particular projects of temporal grandeur and happineſs, for enjoying and multiplying and diverſifying your entertainments, for playing a ſhining part in the world, or in the narrower circle of your acquaintance and countrymen, for maintaining your poſſeſſions and rights, for vindicating your honour, and aſſerting your rank? What pains, what labour in theſe reſpects do ye grudge? What ſerious conſiderations do ye not engage in about them? With what care and caution ye proceed! What ſtriving, what wreſtling and running, how every thing is ſet in motion! And what then after all are theſe repaſts, theſe cloaths, theſe entertainments, this property, theſe diſtinctions, this pomp, theſe poſſeſſions, theſe rights? Are they of ſuch vaſt importance

portance as to deſerve the application of all your capacities and powers, all your time to the acquiſition, the ſecurity, the enjoyment of them? Are they really worth the utmoſt activity of a rational, an immortal, a godlike intelligence? Have they not more ſemblance than reality? Muſt ye not be deprived of them one day or another? Can you carry any of them with you into the grave, or into the future world? What then is the meaning of ſuch great, ſuch extenſive preparatives made at a venture, ſuch ſtrenuous exertions after objects that are ſo totally inſignificant in themſelves, and are of ſo ſhort duration? — — What meaſures on the other hand do ye take about that which is the moſt important concern of all? For the perfection of your immortal ſpirit? What do ye for becoming wiſe, virtuous, well-pleaſing to God, capable of everlaſting happineſs? How much time, how much reflection, how much ſerioufneſs, how much energy do ye apply to this purpoſe? You ſometimes attend divine worſhip, pray ſometimes, occaſionally receive the holy ſacrament, read ſometimes, but how often or how ſeldom, in the ſacred writings, beſtow your alms liberally ſometimes, ſometimes turn your thoughts on God, caſt a glance towards heaven, wiſh ſometimes that you were better, more godly, and even intend it at ſome future time; and then all theſe concerns are provided for, then you have nothing further to do with them for the remainder of your life, then again whole days and weeks paſs by without once

employing your mind and your heart about them. Is not this however a waſte of one's faculties? Is not this to treat trifles with the greateſt ſerioufneſs, and the moſt important objects with unwarrantable levity? And is not that a glaring folly?

It is ſixthly folly, it is downright abſurdity, to believe certain points, or to acknowledge them to be true, and yet not to act in conformity with that belief. If any one ſhould take into his ſtomach, what he himſelf holds to be poiſon; if another remains calmly and immovably ſitting in a houſe, which he believes to be all on fire; if a third implicitly truſts to a perſon, whom he thinks his greateſt enemy: ſhould we not pronounce them all to be fools, perſons who had loſt their wits, and were out of their mind? And how do we differ from them, my friends, in leading an unchriſtian, a ſinful life? Does not our life as manifeſtly contradict our belief? Do we not directly the reverſe of what agreeably to our faith, we ought to do? We believe in an omniſcient, omnipreſent deity, and we are not afraid of ſinning in his preſence, and we think of deceiving him by hypocritical words and geſtures! We believe in Jeſus Chriſt, who gave himſelf for us, who is our deliverer, our ſaviour, our lord and king, and who hereafter will be our judge, and we love him not, we obey him not, we refuſe to form ourſelves upon his temper and pattern, by a conduct at enmity with his will we expoſe ourſelves to the danger of being confounded and condemned hereafter by him!

We

We believe that ſin is diſpleaſing to God, that it is the deſtruction of mankind, and we ſin wittingly and wilfully let the conſequences be what they will! We believe, that a day of judgment awaits us, and that then every one will be recompenſed according to his works, and yet we do ſo many more evil than good works, and yet we concern ourſelves ſo little about how we ſhall be able to abide that judgment! We believe, that our ſoul is immortal, and that we are called to a never ending happineſs, and yet we do ſo little to render ourſelves ſuſceptible of that happineſs, and to prepare our immortal ſoul for a bleſſed, a glorious portion in that future world! Can we call this however anything but a glaring inconſiſtency? And can we be thus inconſiſtent, without acting fooliſhly?

It is again folly, my pious hearers, to pretend to be rich, healthy, happy, while we are not ſo. Who would not pity the ſon of the vaſſal, boaſting of his grand extraction, the beggar bragging of his extenſive poſſeſſions, the emaciated patient vaunting his ſtrength, and pronounce them to be out of their ſenſes? And are not ye guilty of the ſame folly in more important matters, all ye who lead a ſinful unchriſtian life? Ye boaſt of being children of the Higheſt, and of bearing his image, and yet are the ſervants of ſin, and the ſlaves of your paſſions. Ye boaſt of being votaries and adherents of the meek, gentle, peaceable, placable, God-devoted, heavenly-minded Jeſus, and yet ſubmit to the domination of

pride, vanity, hatred, malice, to the government of a worldly, carnal mind. Ye pretend to be ſpiritually ſound and ſtrong, and yet utter diſorder reigns in your heart and mind, and yet you are deficient in the vital knowledge and firm belief of the truth, in inclination and energy to generous, honourable deeds, and yet ſubmit to be hurried away by every temptation to ſin and are preſently weary of ſtruggling againſt iniquity. Ye reckon yourſelves happy, and yet dare not thoroughly probe your hearts, and conſider your condition, and carry about with you a wounded conſcience, and have no right to conſole yourſelves with the favour and complacency of God, on whom however the whole of our happineſs depends, and muſt neceſſarily be terrified at the idea of death, and its conſequences, as menacing the overthrow of your wretched, fallacious happineſs! What illuſions, my pious hearers, what ſelf-deceit! Can a man ſo deceive himſelf, and ſo miſtake his real condition, and yet be in his right mind?

It is in ſhort folly and ſtupidity, if we know, or may and ought to know, ourſelves to be in danger, and do nothing or not all we are able, to avoid that danger. And what various and imminent dangers environ you, ye who lead an unchriſtian, a ſinful life, and yet are ſo indolent and ſecure! Ye are every moment in danger, of being hurried by your inordinate, violent paſſions, to the commiſſion of the moſt flagitious actions, actions at which you would now ſtart with horror; and yet you allow theſe paſſions

to

to exerciſe an unlimited authority over you, and do little or nothing for controuling their ſway, which ought to be day and night your moſt momentous buſineſs. Ye are in danger of entirely loſing your liberty, and of plunging into the wretchedeſt, the cruelleſt bondage, and by every repetition of ſin this danger is increaſed; and yet you go on doing the evil you have been doing all along, thus daily increaſing the difficulty of ever recovering your liberty. Ye may to-day or to-morrow be deprived of all your temporal poſſeſſions and honours, all that is dear and valuable to you in this world; and yet ye are not making intereſt for any better poſſeſſions, any nobler, more laſting diſtinctions, which may be an equivalent for this loſs, and compenſate you for it. Ye are mortal beings, not one hour, not a moment ſecure from the danger of death, and yet ye give yourſelves no trouble to make up your minds for that ſolemn hour, for that deciſive moment, in preparing yourſelves for this unſpeakably important change, and aſſuring yourſelves of an eligible portion in the world to come. Is this to be called acting judiciouſly, or fooliſhly? Is it the glory and ſecurity of the ſage, or the apathy of the lunatic? Oh how juſtly may wiſdom addreſs the perſons who ſo think and act: Forſake the fooliſh, and live, and go in the way of underſtanding: how long, ye ſimple ones, will ye love ſimplicity? Surely, my dear audience, an unchriſtian, ſinful life is the groſſeſt infatuation, the abſurdeſt of all follies.

And

And ſo ſenſeleſsly, ſo fooliſhly have we all, more or leſs, thought and acted, all of us, who are here aſſembled in the preſence of God, to humble ourſelves before him, to implore his pardon, and to vow to him amendment of life. Not one of us, my brethren, who has not more than once declined from the paths of wiſdom, and how many, ah how many, who have never yet trod thoſe paths, who are ſtill ſinners in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word! Oh let us take the firſt ſtep to wiſdom, by confeſſing our folly! Woe to him, who has ſinned, who ſtill leads a ſinful life at enmity with the divine will, and will not yet confeſs, will not own that he has acted, and ſtill acts fooliſhly. A fool, who thinks himſelf wiſe, what a wretched and forlorn creature! Unconcerned and ſecurely he marches along the path of folly, more and more eaſily beguiled by the deceitfulneſs of ſin, more and more inſenſible to the warnings of his teacher, of his friend, of his conſcience, of his God, adds ſin to ſin, folly to folly, and wakes not from his dream, till he is ſo overpowered by ſhame and miſery, that he can no longer eſcape them.

No, let us now be aſhamed of our folly, while this ſhame may be ſalutary to us. Let us ſtand confounded before God, who has afforded us ſo many capacities and means, for being wiſe, and for continually conducting ourſelves more wiſely. The non-employment, and the miſ-employment of theſe capacities and means, the guilt of ingratitude which we have contracted towards our creator and father, the great diſſimi-

diſſimilarity, the manifeſt oppoſition, thence ariſing between him and us, our diſtant retroceſſion from the goal of perfection, and from him, the primordial fount of light and happineſs, ſhould ſink us to the ground before him, thoroughly pervade us with ſhame and remorſe, and put into our mouths the language of the penitent: I am afraid, o God, to lift my eyes unto thee, for I have refuſed to hear thy voice, thy call to wiſdom and felicity, have liſtened to the enticing voice of ſin, have allowed myſelf to be dazzled by her deceitful charms, truſted her lying promiſes, and am fallen on the way of folly and miſery. Let us however be ſo aſhamed of our folly, my dear friends, as men are aſhamed of it who are actually brought to reflection, to better ſentiments, to ſelf-knowledge, to ſome ſenſe of our loſt or ſullied dignity, who are really become attentive to the call of wiſdom, and reſolved to follow it. To acknowledge, confeſs, lament that we have acted fooliſhly, and then act again in like manner, how deeply muſt it degrade and diſgrace a human creature, what tortures of fruitleſs repentance muſt it prepare for him hereafter! No, my dear friends, may every one of us now, while ſurrounded by a ſomewhat clearer light, open his eyes to it, by the brightneſs of it ſearch into his heart and his conduct, tell himſelf directly, how and in what inſtances he in particular has acted fooliſhly, of what ſins and failings he in particular is guilty, what in his ſentiments and in his conduct particularly militates with wiſdom, with the will of God, with the chriſtian

chriſtian temper, and then may we exclaim: No, ſin ſhall no more beguile me. Sin is ſtupidity, is folly. Her promiſes are lies; her pleaſures are extremely fallacious, are ſooner or later ſources of pain and remorſe; her benefits have more of ſemblance than reality; her charms can only impoſe on the ſhort-ſighted. O truth, wiſdom, divine truth, chriſtian wiſdom, ye, ye ſhall be the guides of my future life, reject not with diſdain the wretch who has hitherto not known you, and ſlighted your ſummons to happineſs, let my path be brightened by your light, your counſel guide my ſteps, your ſpirit revive and ſtrengthen, admoniſh, chaſten, alarm me, whenever my feet approach ſome crooked path, or my ear is ſtruck by the faſcinating voice of ſin and vanity, at ſuch moments let the idea of God and of futurity, of what as a man and a chriſtian, I am and am intended to be and to become, ſhake my very ſoul, and fright me back from the way of folly and perdition. May your gentleſt whiſpers be audible at all times, your dictates ever ſacred to me, may they conduct me on the path of chriſtian virtue to peace of mind, that balm of life, to ſatisfaction and felicity!

SERMON XLI.

The Infamy of a Sinful Courſe of Life.

GOD, who art our creator and our father, thou haſt crowned us, thy children, with glory and honour, elevated us to the rank of rational creatures, endowed us with capacities and diſpoſitions for great undertakings, for generous and noble exploits, and made us but little inferior to the angels. We are thy offspring, derive our origin from thee, bear thy image, are thy children, are immortal. We have in thy ſon Jeſus, a relative, a brother, who became in all things like unto us, who for the reſtoration of our dignity came upon earth, lived among mankind and ſacrificed himſelf for them, and who intends to raiſe us with him to that perfection and felicity, which he poſſeſſes in heaven. O God, what might we not all be and become, if we underſtood how properly to prize and to uſe our privileges, if we were never unmindful of our extraction and our deſtination! But how ſhould we be covered with ſhame and confuſion at this idea, which ought to inſpire us with the ſublimeſt joy! How little are we that, which we ſhould and might be! How greatly weakened, enervated, decayed, degraded are we yet by ſin! How hard the yoke of it bears upon us! How far do our temper and life remove us

from thee, our father, and from Jeſus Chriſt, our firſt-born brother! Oh that our criminal frailty, our voluntary degradation, might ſtare us full in the face, and fill our hearts with the profoundeſt inward ſentiment of ſhame, but alſo with the moſt active impulſe to raiſe ourſelves again to thee and to the dignity of thy children, to burſt every tie of bondage and to ſtrive after ſubſtantial honour, after chriſtian perfection! Bleſs therefore to this end the conſiderations, which are now to employ us. Teach us to perceive and abhor ſin as the moſt infamous of all infamous things, and grant that this abhorrence may ſhield us againſt all its temptations and wiles. O thou that heareſt prayer receive our petitions. Thy ſacrifices, o God, are a broken ſpirit, a broken and a contrite heart thou wilt not deſpiſe. Let our contemplations be attended with an aſſimilating and transforming power: we implore it of thee in the name of our lord and ſaviour Jeſus Chriſt and ſum up our requeſts in the words which in his gracious condeſcenſion he taught us to uſe. Our father, &c.

ROMANS vi. 20, 21.

When ye were the ſervants of ſin, ye were free from righteouſneſs. What fruit had ye then in thoſe things whereof ye are now aſhamed?

THE dread of ſhame is common to all mankind — is in every human breaſt a ſtronger or weaker principle of conduct — it incites all to many actions which they otherwiſe would not do, and reſtrains them from many which they otherwiſe would not leave undone.

undone. To whom is it totally indifferent, how he is looked upon, what we think of him, what opinion we entertain of his behaviour, whether we eſteem him or not? This dread of ſhame is implanted in our hearts by the creator himſelf. But how wrong the direction that has been given it by prejudices, examples and vices! How erroneous the judgment of the multitude concerning what confers honour or diſgrace, what merits praiſe or blame! How often are we not more aſhamed of good than ill! How often do we ſeek our glory in our ſhame! And in fact, my pious hearers, were it not ſo, how could a man be ſo tranquil and eaſy in the ſervice of ſin and vice? Muſt he not inwardly bluſh at himſelf; muſt he not be aſhamed before God and the world? Muſt he not with downcaſt eyes and baſhful looks purſue the way which he chuſes to walk? For this is certain, ſin is diſgraceful to man, a ſinful, vicious life is an infamous life — it is ſo even when free from groſs and flagrant crimes! How happy ſhould I, how happy would you be, my chriſtian auditors, if I were able to convince you all of what I here advance, could ſet it in a perſpicuous light before you!

We lately pointed out to you the folly of a ſinful, unchriſtian courſe of life; and to-day we intend to call your attention to the infamy of ſuch a courſe of life. Indeed they are both cloſely linked together: folly is infamous and induces infamy; neither can well be conceived without the other. However, we may ſtill conſider an unchriſtian, ſinful courſe of life

life on divers ſides, on which the infamy of it is more ſtriking; and this we will by the divine aſſiſtance do at preſent.

The apoſtle Paul in our text repreſents the life of a man, who ſubmits to the domination of ſin, on this very ſide. When ye were the ſervants of ſin, ſays he to chriſtians, ye were free from righteouſneſs, ye would not ſubmit to be reſtrained by its laws, paid no deference to its authority and injunctions, followed blindly your luſts and paſſions. But what fruit had ye then in thoſe things? What were the conſequences of that lawleſs diſſolute life? Such as ye are forced to be aſhamed of now. So it is, my dear friends, ſin deceives a man: it flatters his love of liberty and throws him into bondage: it promiſes him honour and rewards him with ſhame. A ſinful life is an infamous life. And this is what, after making a brief preliminary remark, I now deſign to ſhew you.

When I ſpeak of the infamy of a ſinful courſe of life, my pious hearers, by ſuch a life I mean not merely a life branded by manifeſt and ſhocking enormities, by heinous crimes, by odious vices, ſtigmatiſed by all mankind. Nobody doubts that it is infamous to rob, to ſteal, to murder, to be addicted to drunkenneſs, to ſeduce innocence, to commit perjury and the like. Theſe are vices and crimes, in behalf of which nobody has a word to offer, which among all civilized nations are attended with public, judicial infamy. No, by a ſinful, unchriſtian life,

I mean

I mean ſuch a life as is not regulated by the principles of religion and of chriſtianity but by the principles and uſages of the people of this world, with whom the predominant affections are depraved, their principal views vain and worldly; with whom it is of greater conſequence to comply with their luſts and appetites, than to comply with the will of God; to provide for their external welfare, than for the improvement and perfection of their mind, more for their promotion and their amuſement in the preſent, than for their portion in the future world: whether they moreover purſue an offenſive or an inoffenſive courſe, and commit or refrain from flagrant crimes. Concerning ſuch a mode of thinking and acting I affirm, that it is an infamous mode of thinking and acting, diſgraceful both to the man and the chriſtian, and this I will now endeavour more circumſtantially to ſhew you, and thereby awaken you to alter and correct ſuch a life.

It is firſt infamous, to act contrary to our nature, to our ſtation, to our deſtination and to be and to do directly the reverſe of what, in virtue of theſe relations, we ought to be and to do. Do we not reckon it diſgraceful in a man for the fordid love of lucre to force the members of his body out of their natural ſituation, to weaken, to crook, to diſlocate, to diſtort, to cripple, to maim them, in order that by extraordinary geſtures, unnatural and dangerous attitudes, poſtures and geſticulations, by difficult, but totally uſeleſs, arts to divert the ſpectators and thus to gain a livelihood? And who would not deſpiſe

the monarch, who, neglecting his regal functions, ſhould occupy himſelf in things, which the meaneſt of his vaſſals could perform as well as he? Who would not deſpiſe the heir apparent, who, deſtined to govern and to bleſs nations entire, conſumes his beſt years and faculties in childiſh paſtimes or in low voluptuouſneſs, and afterwards when he accedes to the throne, has neither knowledge nor inclination, nor ſpirit for the affairs of his exalted ſtation, nor capacity for enjoying the real advantages of it? And is not this the caſe, is not this the infamy of all thoſe who lead a ſinful, unchriſtian courſe of life? Or is perhaps ſuch a life conſiſtent with their nature, is it conſiſtent with their ſtation here on earth, is it conſiſtent with their deſtination in the world to come?

Thy nature, o man, is noble — is far ſuperior to that of the beaſts of the field. Reaſon is its prerogative: virtue its dignity: ſimilarity with God its glory. Thy capacities are great; thy intellect capacious; thy heart ſenſible and ſuſceptible of vaſt enjoyments; thy force can execute much, operate to a great extent. And what doſt thou in leading a ſinful life, an unchriſtian life? Thou degradeſt and diſgraceſt thy nature. Thy reaſon is compelled to obey thy ſenſes, which thou haſt in common with the brutes: thy underſtanding is preſſed into the ſervice of error and vice: thy heart is forced to put up with vile and ſinful gratifications, which always leave it empty and cannot appeaſe its longing after happineſs: thy ſtrength is waſted on impertinent

nent trifles, in idleneſs, in wickedneſs — thou art more and more unlike thy creator — and thy nobleſt capacities remain undeveloped or are ruined by abuſe.

Thy ſtation here on earth is important, o man, and thy deſtination in the future world is grand. Here thou art deſigned to aſſert the honour of humanity, the dignity of a child of God, of a chriſtian — art to become wiſe and virtuous, to exerciſe thyſelf in juſtice and beneficence, to acquire a taſte for refined ſatisfactions, to qualify thyſelf for higher dignities; and there thou art, in proportion to thy fidelity, to be promoted, recompenſed, bleſſed, placed over many others, employed in more important affairs and advanced from one ſtage of perfection to another.

But doſt thou this, art thou this, durſt thou promiſe thyſelf this, if thou leadeſt an unchriſtian, ſinful life, if thou lookeſt ſolely at the preſent and not at the future, if thou art now the ſlave of thy luſts and paſſions, if truth and wiſdom and virtue are to thee indifferent or not the moſt momentous objects, if thou art greedier of wealth, fonder of empty honours, than of ſpiritual, permanent perfection, art more eager after riotous, ſtupefying pleaſures, than for the complacency of thy God, than for the reſemblance and fellowſhip of thy leader and chieftain Jeſus Chriſt, than for the happineſs of the life to come? Canſt thou purſue ſuch a train of thought and conduct, without oppoſition to thy nature, thy

ſtation, the proper end of thy being, without diſgracing thyſelf? Muſt thou not have been differently conſtituted, deſigned for different purpoſes, and have been placed in different relations; muſt thou not at leaſt paſs thy life among totally ignorant, uninformed perſons, perſons incapable of any better ſentiments and rambling abroad without God and without hope, in order that ſuch a courſe of life ſhould not diſhonour thee? Certainly here it may be ſaid with juſtice: Let the dead bury their dead: let thoſe who have loſt all ſenſe of the beautiful, the good, the generous, who are become entirely carnal, let them creep about upon the ground like the reptiles of the field, grub up the earth for their choiceſt treaſures, blind themſelves with duſt, wallow in the mire, and thus loſe ſight of God and heaven, their proper country: let thoſe, who were never irradiated by the light of chriſtianity, think and live as if there were no God, no providence, no future retribution, as though all their exertions, proſpects, hopes were confined to this handfull of earth, to this moment of time! But if ye be chriſtians, if the call to ſuperior perfection, to greater felicity have reached your ears; if ye believe and know that you are deſigned to concur in the plan of God's providence, that you have him for your ſovereign, your inſpector, your father, your judge, that ye are immortal, that a higher ſtate awaits you: oh be aſhamed of leading a ſinful courſe of life, ſince it is in direct oppoſition to your place and rank, to your deſtination; it is not pro-

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per for rational, but for irrational creatures, not for immortal, but for entirely mortal beings, not for the children of God, but for the children of wrath, not for the citizens of heaven, but for ſlaves of the duſt. Ye degrade yourſelves by ſuch a life, render yourſelves unworthy of the poſt which the creator has aſſigned you in his empire, you forfeit, throw away your high prerogatives — recede from the perfection of which you are capable, inſtead of approaching it, and neither are nor become, what ye are deſigned to be and to become: and this is infamous, if anything can deſerve that epithet.

Secondly. Weakneſs and debility, which we have brought upon ourſelves by our own fault, is likewiſe infamous. Who does not deſpiſe the man, who has nothing of ſedateneſs and compoſure, nothing manly in him, who trembles at every danger, ſinks under every burden, is incapable of any great undertaking, and has no ſtrength and courage either for doing or ſuffering; the man who whether in his buſineſs or his pleaſures has more of the levity of the childiſh than the ſeriouſneſs and dignity of the maturer age, in proſperity like the youth is intoxicated with the tranſports of joy, in adverſity like the infant whimpers and whines and is never maſter of his temper? But what enervates, what debilitates, what debaſes a man more than an unchriſtian, ſinful courſe of life? I am not now ſpeaking merely of the exceſſes of intemperance and voluptuouſneſs, which ſo frequently ſhatter a man's conſtitution, ſo often prevent him

from ever arriving at maturity or bring on him a premature old age, but in general of a ſinful life, in oppoſition to the precepts of religion and chriſtianity. What motives, incentives has the man, who leads ſuch a courſe of life, to great and generous actions, to arduous, magnanimous ſacrifices, he, who is actuated by ſelf-love and ſelf-intereſt, he, who has not learnt in the ſchool of wiſdom and religion to govern himſelf, to deny himſelf, and to live more for the welfare of others than his own? What can elevate his mind, make him advert to his origin, to the firſt, primæval ſource of life and energy, and thence derive the utmoſt firmneſs and dignity, ſince he is tied and bound to the poſſeſſions, the honours, the pleaſures of the earth, ſince the exerciſes of devotion and religion are foreign to him; ſince he lives unacquainted with his creator and at ſuch a diſtance from him? How is the compoſed, manly character apparent in him, who ſo frequently, ſo readily occupies himſelf with toys and gewgaws, dreams away, ſquanders away, laughs away almoſt the whole of his ſo ſhort, ſo fleeting, and yet in its conſequences ſo important a life, ſo reluctantly, ſo ſeldom engages in ſerious concerns, in meditations on God and himſelf, in the preparatory diſcipline for a ſuperior life, prefers every idle amuſement to the worſhip of his maker, every opportunity for diſſipation and diſtraction to the opportunities for information and improvement? And is it ſtrength or weakneſs to be able to refuſe oneſelf nothing, to break off from

from nothing, to forego nothing, to be long conſidering in the choice between good and ill, to require compulſion as it were to every good action, to be unable to bear any wrong with patience, any affront without anger and reſentment and to forgive without any ſatisfaction, to ſuffer any conſiderable privation of temporal property, of outward diſtinctions, without corroding grief, without bitter tears? Is it ſtrength or weakneſs, to be inſolent in proſperity, to forget our dependence on the Almighty, to truſt in our wealth, our authority, our power, and to lean upon deciduous and crumbling objects as upon a rock, and then, when misfortune and diſtreſs invade our falſe ſecurity, to be faint-hearted, to abandon hope and courage, to reject all conſolation, to murmur againſt God and man, and to ſtand ſhuddering on the brink of deſpair? And thus in numberleſs inſtances thinks, thus acts, thus behaves the man who leads a ſinful, an unchriſtian life. Such proofs does he daily as it were give of his criminal weakneſs of mind, his wilful depravity. And muſt not this redound to his infamy? Muſt he not be diſhonoured by ſuch a courſe of thought and conduct?

An unchriſtian, ſinful life is thirdly infamous, becauſe it deprives a man of his liberty and makes him a ſlave. How contemptible in our eyes is a ſlave, who needs not be a ſlave, who might be free, but diſregards his liberty, is not ſenſible to its worth, fools it away, offers his neck to the firſt tyrant who holds a collar to him, voluntarily crouches beneath

the yoke, and now glories in it, or at leaſt by his own fault has no longer either courage or ſtrength to caſt it off! And this is the true picture of the man, of every man, who leads a ſinful, unchriſtian, vicious life, whoſe predominant ſentiments and affections are wicked, and who has already for ſome time purſued ſuch a train of thought and conduct. He is a ſlave, or will at leaſt ſoon become ſo, unleſs he alters and corrects his temper and life. He will not always be at liberty — will be continually leſs and leſs, will at length be not at all at liberty, to chuſe, upon rational principles and perceptions between what is right and wrong, good and bad, honourable and ſcandalous, or to follow his own conviction, his conſcience, the voice of nature, the call of God. No, he muſt do, muſt at laſt without his direction or conſent do, what his luſts and paſſions order him to do, and what he himſelf afterwards, when he has performed his drudgery and can liſten to his reaſon and his conſcience, muſt diſapprove and lament. Thus one is carried captive by the luſts of the fleſh, another by vanity, a third by anger, a fourth by hatred and malice, a fifth by envy, another by the love of ſlander, another again is fettered by indolence and ſloth, thus all are at times urged on, now to this now to that appetite, diſcourſe, action hoſtile to truth, to juſtice, to moderation, to humanity, and none does that, which if he could reflect, if he had the command of himſelf and could follow his better perceptions, if he were not a ſlave, would

would do. Thus muſt every one, who is ſtill addicted to ſin at every inſtant, when he feels that he is a man and bears the name of chriſtian, hold that deſponding language: the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. And is not ſuch a condition, ſuch a vaſſalage a diſgrace to the man, to the chriſtian? The man, who is created after the image of God, endowed with underſtanding and reaſon, deſigned for liberty, for immortality, for perfection? The chriſtian, to whom the goſpel offers ſo much light, ſo much energy to goodneſs, ſo much aid in combating all evil luſts and paſſions, the chriſtian, the confeſſor of a ſaviour and lord, who came into the world and ſuffered death, that he might emancipate his votaries from the yoke of bondage and eſtabliſh them in liberty? To be called a man, a chriſtian and yet be the ſervant of ſin, what a diſhonour to human nature, what a diſgrace to chriſtianity!

It is fourthly infamous, to live at variance and in contradiction with oneſelf, to be inclined one day thus, the next otherwiſe, to be in one humour to-day and to-morrow of another, now to act one way and then exactly the reverſe, and thus to be the ſport of accident and paſſion. For this likewiſe denotes weakneſs of mind, a want of ſolidity in principles, inclinations, purpoſes. Who would make it his boaſt, who would think it an honour to him, to be like a reed, ſhaken to and fro by every wind? And is not that the image of the man, who leads a ſinful,

ſinful, unchriſtian life? Has he any ſolid principles; any fixt purpoſes? Can he ſafely rely upon himſelf, on his ſentiments? Is he ſure, that to-morrow, in a few days, in a few weeks, he ſhall ſtill think, judge, act as he does at preſent, that he ſhall at one time as always eſteem, love, do the true, the beautiful, the good, let his outward circumſtances alter as they may? Dare he promiſe himſelf, even then to retain his peace of mind, as the fruit of a good conſcience and a conduct well-pleaſing to God, and not ceaſe to be happy? Is his temper even, uniform, conſiſtent, both in the church and in the world, at home in his family and abroad in ſociety, in healthy and ſickly days, in proſperity and in adverſity? Does he act everywhere and at all times upon the ſame principles of truth and rectitude? In the ſame views, to become better, more uſeful to his brethren and more ſuſceptible of the felicity of heaven? Does he not generally ſubmit to be governed by mere extrinſic accidents? Is he not one while calm, then uneaſy, now melancholy, then glad, now contented, then diſcontented, now bold even to raſhneſs, then all timidity and conſternation, according as the objects around him are more or leſs to his mind, according as he is diſturbed or undiſturbed in his ordinary diverſions and paſtimes, according as ſomething agreeable or diſagreeable has happened in his affairs, in his intercourſe with mankind or elſewhere? — — Is he not, if religion and chriſtianity be of any moment to him, if his heart be not yet entirely hardened,

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ſometimes diſpoſed one way, ſometimes directly otherwiſe towards religion and chriſtianity; to-day all zeal, to-morrow all indifference, to-day all in favour of goodneſs, to-morrow inclining to evil, now godly, then not godly, according to the intercourſe he has with one ſet of perſons or another, according to the different company he frequents? How often this day, this hour, does he form the beſt reſolutions, and act in direct oppoſition to them the next day, the next hour? — — And even his evil propenſities and luſts, how often are they not at ſtrife together! To what inconſiſtent actions do they not impell him! Now haughty and inſolent, then baſe and cringing; now liberal and profuſe even to prodigality, then frugal even to avarice; now all eſteem and affection, then indifferent or ſpiteful towards the ſame perſons and parties, the man that leads an unchriſtian, a ſinful courſe of life, ſeldom remains long together alike, changes his ſentiments and his conduct, according as his occaſional feeling, his preſent intereſt, his ſuddently excited and often as ſuddenly evaneſcent inclination or averſion, or any trifling circumſtance in his outward condition changes; and thus is he the miſerable puppet of his libertine levity and paſſions. But is this a reſpectable, an honourable character? Is it the character of a wiſe man or of a chriſtian? Muſt it not degrade and diſgrace the man, to be ſo ſeldom at unity with himſelf, to be ſo frequently inconſiſtent, and to make his behaviour as well as his happineſs dependent on ſo many caſual, generally very trifling accidents?

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Conſider however laſtly, my pious hearers, whether it be honourable or infamous, to lead a life, in which one muſt very frequently ſhun oneſelf or one's own conſcience, the preſence of the wiſeſt, beſt, nobleſt of mankind, and the ſentiment of God, the ſovereign and judge of all; in which we muſt very frequently avoid reflection, conſciouſneſs, examination, the light, the day, and ſeek our refuge in ſtupefaction and darkneſs. And is not this your caſe, all ye who lead an unchriſtian, a ſinful courſe of life? Do not ever and anon accuſing, warning thoughts ariſe in your breaſts, which ye are obliged to diſmiſs or ſuppreſs, in order to be eaſy? Does the unexpected intruſion, the preſence of thoſe perſons, whom ye hold to be eminently wiſe and religious, never perplex you, never diſtreſs you? Dare ye lay open to their judgment your projects and deſires, or invite them to partake in your amuſements and occupations, converſations and actions? Dare ye in whatever ye think and do, lift up your eyes towards heaven and boldly bear in mind the deity and his omniſcience? Are ye never afraid to call yourſelves to account at the cloſe of the day and to revolve in thought your behaviour in it? Have ye never reaſon to dread, leſt what ye have ſaid or done, or even intended to do, ſhould be known to others and put you to ſhame? Are ye never obliged to do violence to yourſelves, in order to conceal your paſſions and views, and to appear better than ye are? Dare ye therefore, allowing for human imperfections and in-

firmities, walk intrepidly and with a good conſcience before God and man, neither ſhrink from your own inſpection nor that of others, and as children of light come to the light, that your deeds may be made manifeſt? — — And if ye dare not do ſo, or but ſeldom, and then with many reſervations, is not ſurely your way of thinking and living ſuch as that you ought to be aſhamed of it? And do ye not therefore yourſelves confeſs that it diſhonours the man and redounds to his infamy and diſgrace.

However, a ſinful, unchriſtian courſe of life is not only abſtractedly conſidered, infamous, but it likewiſe actually brings infamy on a man, frequently, yea commonly even in the preſent life. Becauſe a reverence for virtue and moral rectitude and the diſapprobation of vice and an abhorrence for it are even among perſons, who are nothing leſs than virtuous, much more general, than would probably be imagined. It is only when a man is hoodwinked by paſſion and ſelf-love, that his notions of right and wrong are confounded, and then he often takes darkneſs for light or light for darkneſs. In moſt other caſes he judges rightly concerning the good or ill condition of human ſentiments and actions, and diſapproves and deteſts in others the very ſame thing that he approves or at leaſt excuſes in himſelf. Who does not abominate, who does not ſhun the ſhuffler, the cheat, the falſe-hearted, the calumniator! Who can have any reſpect for the thoughtleſs, for thoſe who have no ſettled principles, on whoſe opinions we can never rely, who are fickle and unſtable in

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all their ways? Who can behold the ſlave of ſenſuality, of voluptuouſneſs, of wrath, of vanity in the inſtant when his paſſion has got the upperhand of him, without deſpiſing him? Who will ſhew honour to him who is obdurate and cruel, who wantonly injures others, or who not only does no good, nothing generally uſeful, but is rapacious and ſelfiſh? Will not both good and bad men, will not particularly the wiſeſt and beſt of mankind teſtify in various ways their diſpleaſure at ſuch a diſpoſition and ſuch a conduct, and how then can the man who leads a ſinful, vicious courſe of life be ſafe from diſgraceful reproaches, from public infamy and contempt?

But, my dear friends, ſhould even no infamy attach to him in this world; ſhould his quality, his ſtation, his office, his addreſs, his money protect him from the outward demonſtration of that ſcorn, which we have in our hearts for him; ſhould he even find the means of bribing, of ſuborning, of overawing mercenary panegyriſts, vile ſycophants, or baſe-born ſouls to ſhew him marks of reſpect and honour: what will ſcreen him afterwards at the day of judgment — what in the future world, from the infamy, the moſt oppreſſive, moſt intolerable infamy? When his vile or wicked ſentiments, his fooliſh and corrupt courſe of life, in direct oppoſition to the true end of his creation, pernicious to himſelf and to others, his ſecret artifices, his diſguiſed paſſions, his ſins and iniquities tranſacted in private are revealed; when all the wretched, the innocent, whom he has diſtreſſed,

treſſed, prejudiced, injured, corrupted, riſe up againſt him; when he ſtands expoſed in all his nakedneſs and deformity — depraved, debaſed, diſgraced, undone as he is by ſins and vice; when, whether he has been a king or prince, or magiſtrate, or teacher, whether he have formerly acted ever ſo ſhining a part, diveſted of that falſe luſtre, he is declared and known to be what he really is and was — who can conceive the confuſion, the ſhame with which he will then be overwhelmed, and which, were it poſſible, would utterly annihilate him? And in the unhallowed ſociety of perſons, who are to ſhare his fate in the future world, how will the reproaches of his conſcience and the partners in his guilt — how the conſciouſneſs of his folly and the ſentiment of his merited degradation prey upon his vitals!

So certain is it, my dear friends, that an unchriſtian, ſinful, vicious courſe of life is an infamous, a diſgraceful courſe of life, that the ſervice of unrighteouſneſs, as it is worded in our text, yields no other fruit, than ſuch as we muſt be aſhamed of, which is attended with extreme diſgrace both in the preſent and eſpecially in the future world. Men, chriſtians, would we avoid experiencing ſooner or latter this ſolemn truth to our confuſion and diſmay, and lamenting in vain, that we would not take warning of it in time; men, chriſtians, have we ſtill any ſentiment of human dignity, of chriſtian dignity, any ſenſe of real, laſting honour remaining; men, chriſtians, are we ſtill any way concerned, how we ſhall face the tribunal of Chriſt on that great day of judgment

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and of retribution, whether we ſhall then have the reputation of good or the infamy of wicked perſons, the reward of ſincere or the wages of falſe, hypocritical chriſtians: oh then let us deteſt and abhor not only groſs treſpaſſes and ſins, not only the flagrant vices, but all, all ſins, all baſe, unchriſtian ſentiments, affections, actions, as what will completely degrade, diſhonour, diſgrace us? Far, let each of us heartily exclaim, far be it from me any longer to act contrary to my nature, to my ſtation, to the proper end of my being, to be and to do the reverſe of what according to the will of my creator I ſhould be and ſhould do! Far, far be it from me to weaken and enervate myſelf by folly and ſin, thereby to render myſelf incapable of whatever is great, generous, honourable, to plunge myſelf in bondage, or to continue in thraldom, to be always at variance and in contradiction with myſelf, and ſo to live as to be afraid of God and of mankind and of my own reflections, and to be obliged to love darkneſs rather than light, that my deeds may not be manifeſt! No, my nature ſhall be ſacred to me, my preſent ſtate important and honourable, my future deſtination ever before my eyes! Vigour of mind, liberty, truth, order, a good, unſullied conſcience towards God and towards man, to walk in the light, ſhall henceforth be the object of all my endeavours! Thus will I by truly chriſtian ſentiments, by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for glory and honour and immortality, and afterwards I ſhall aſſuredly reap from it everlaſting life.

SERMON XLII.

The Miſery of a ſinful Courſe of Life.

GOD, father of light, primeval ſource and diſpenſer of happineſs, we thy human offspring long and endeavour after happineſs; and this longing, this endeavour thou haſt indiſſolubly connected with our nature. Thou wouldſt that we ſhould be happy, and none of us haſt thou left deficient in means for obtaining his deſire, none need vainly to ſtrive after that object. And yet are we not all, perhaps but few of us are happy! For but too often we look for happineſs in objects that cannot yield it, — ſeek it on the road of ſin and vice, which always carries us farther from it, and find trouble and wretchedneſs, where we were in queſt of pleaſure and ſatisfaction. Lord thou art righteous — art ſupremely gracious, a father who ſuffers not his children to ruſh unadmoniſhed on devious paths, and to miſs of their aim. But we muſt with ſhame and confuſion accuſe ourſelves of ſo ſeldom ſubmitting to be cautioned by thee, of hearkening more to our luſts and paſſions, than to thy benign and holy will, and are then unjuſt and perverſe enough to murmur againſt thee, and arraign the conduct of thy provi-

dence, when we have rendered ourſelves miſerable. Ah, Everlaſting Father, thy compaſſion like thyſelf, is infinite, thy clemency reaches from heaven to earth; weary and heavy laden, bring us back from our deviations, conduct us to the way that leads to thee and to ſubſtantial happineſs; illuminate us by thy light, that we may learn to diſtinguiſh reality from ſpecious appearances, and let us be no longer deluded by ſin. Convince us by the doctrines, which are now to be delivered, that a ſinful life is a wretched, a miſerable life; and let this conviction be vital in us, and incite us without delay to an alteration and amendment of our heart and life. Ah gracious God, do thou diſpel the prejudices, the errors, the infatuation of ſelf-love and paſſion that might prevent us from ſeriouſly reflecting on ſuch weighty concerns, and judging of of them as they deſerve. This we requeſt and implore for the ſake of thy ſon Jeſus, and ſurely truſting in his promiſes, ſum up our petitions in that form of words which he vouchſafed to teach us. Our father, &c.

ROMANS vi. 21.

The end of thoſe things is death.

DREAD of miſery and avidity for happineſs are inconteſtably the ſtrongeſt impellents to human determinations and actions: in ſome ſenſe are the only ones. For whoever is afraid of ſcorn, of infamy, of bondage, of toilſome pains and labour, and determines

mines his conduct accordingly, conſiders thoſe objects as ſources of diſſatisfaction and miſery; and whoever is incited by ambition, by the deſire of fame, by the love of action to great undertakings, holds this honour, this fame, this activity to be eſſential ingredients of his happineſs. Satisfaction and diſſatisfaction, pleaſure and diſpleaſure are therefore the ultimate, the moſt deeply ſeated cauſes of human appetences and averſions, of all that we covet or abhor, do or do not, endeavour to avoid or to obtain. Satisfaction and pleaſure are ſought and expected by man, equally when he ſins as when he does good. He never chuſes evil as evil; never rejects good as good. Never does he anything, which, at the inſtant that he unconſtrainedly reſolves upon it, or actually does it, he believes, with conviction believes, that it will render him miſerable. Never does he omit or neglect, upon mature deliberation and from free election, anything whereof he is fully perſuaded that it will make him wretched. And if notwithſtanding a man ſo often does, and purpoſely does, what muſt neceſſarily render him miſerable, and ſo often neglects, and voluntarily neglects, what will aſſuredly make him happy, it proceeds ſolely from not chuſing with due conſideration and prudence, from conſulting rather his paſſions than his reaſon in his choice, from ſuffering himſelf to be deceived by ſpecious appearances, frequently taking that for miſery which is not miſery, and eſteeming that for happi-

neſs which is not happineſs, or from not knowing how to compare and hold the balance between greater and ſmaller, permanent and tranſient ſatisfaction and diſſatisfaction, inferior and ſuperior delights, uſeful and noxious diſquietude, tranſitory and durable happineſs. Whatever can here incite him to reflection and calm conſideration, whatever can afford him light and conviction on this matter, lead him in this reſpect to juſt and impartial judgments, and firm principles, defends him from miſery, and ſhews him the ſtrait road to happineſs. And this religion does, my pious hearers, and this ought alſo the teacher of religion to do. His buſineſs is to endeavour, not to ſuppreſs, not to eradicate our natural appetites, but to give them their true, the beſt direction. It is his duty to render us, not indifferent towards ſatisfaction and diſſatisfaction, towards pleaſure and diſpleaſure, but circumſpect in diſcerning and in employing the proper ſources and means thereof. He is to ſet before us life and death, miſery and happineſs, teach us better to underſtand, and more juſtly to judge between them. Such is the important, the honourable appointment of the teacher of religion! How often does it preſent itſelf to my mind! How often does my heart pant after the ability to fulfil it more completely and ſucceſsfully! Oh that I might at preſent be able effectually to execute the commiſſion of religion to all who wiſh to be happy and are not ſo! I addreſs you on her part with

with the apoſtle in our text: The end of thoſe things, the wages of the ſervice of ſin, is death, is wretchedneſs and miſery. An unchriſtian, a ſinful life, taken in its whole extent, and in all its conſequences, is a wretched, a miſerable life. This is the propoſition, of the truth whereof I now hope to convince you. In order the more effectually to do ſo, my pious hearers, we will not refuſe the man who ſtill leads an unchriſtian, a ſinful life, any ſpecies of happineſs, of pleaſure, of advantage that he can procure; we will not repreſent his life as more deplorable, more joyleſs, more wretched than it really is: but we will contraſt happineſs with happineſs, troubles with troubles, proſpects with proſpects, what he has with what he wants, what he does not ſuffer with what he really ſuffers; and then ſee, whether on the whole he is the greater gainer or loſer, whether his life, conſidered in its full ſcope and extent, deſerves not the epithets of wretched and miſerable.

Firſt therefore to ſet happineſs againſt happineſs. What happineſs do ye enjoy, and what happineſs are ye deprived of, you, who regulate your lives not by the precepts of religion and of chriſtianity, but by your luſts, and by the manners of the world? Underſtand my queſtion rightly. I aſk not, what poſſeſſions, what riches, what dignities, what extrinſic advantages ye poſſeſs? Theſe ſeveral objects form no part of happineſs, though they may be means thereto. We may have them and be very wretched, not have them and be very happy. No, I aſk con-

cerning happineſs, concerning agreeable ſenſations, concerning a mode of exiſtence, in which all goes right with us, wherewith we are entirely ſatisfied, wherewith we are thoroughly pleaſed, and whereby we are not deprived of any ſtill more agreeable ſenſations, any ſtill more delightful ſentiment of our exiſtence. In agreeable ſenſations, in moments and hours, when it is well with you, when you rejoice in your life and your faculties, you are certainly not defective; thoſe ye feel, thoſe ye enjoy, more or leſs, ſhorter or longer, and far from me be the folly to diſpute your feelings, or conteſt your enjoyment. Many innocent, legitimate pleaſures and ſatisfactions ye have in common with the beſt, the moſt virtuous of mankind, with only this difference, that they generally do not taſte ſo ſweet to you as to them, that ye are leſs ſkilful than they in the art of refining and thoroughly enjoying them. Ye have likewiſe pleaſures and ſatisfactions, which are more or leſs peculiar to you, and among theſe are even objects, which abſtractedly conſidered may be nothing leſs than agreeable. The moſt troubleſome attire, the moſt laborious play, the moſt tireſome part in great and brilliant companies, the moſt frivolous, but faſhionable converſation, the loweſt jeſts, the loudeſt, moſt violent fits of laughter, the moſt riotous, moſt licentious amuſements; all theſe procure you pleaſure and ſatisfaction, and it is not fancy, it is not ſelf-deceit, ye feel it, ye experience it, and feelings cannot be combated by argument. It is well with you, ye

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are ſatisfied, if ye partake in every public and private entertainment, if ye employ all the leiſure ye have from your neceſſary occupations, in ſocial diverſions and parties of pleaſure, whenever ye have frequent and various opportunities to diſplay your external diſtinctions, whether they conſiſt in wealth, or high ſtation, or beauty, or poliſhed manners. It is well with you, ye are ſatisfied, whenever ye have an opportunity for ſhewing the brilliancy of your wit, your ingenuity in judging of men and things, for communicating your ſtring of anecdotes about what is paſſing and not paſſing among your friends, acquaintance, neighbours, and thus to adminiſter food and vivacity to ſocial intercourſe. Even when ye manifeſtly do ill, I deny not that ye enjoy more or leſs pleaſure, real pleaſure. Ye have unqueſtionably agreeable ſenſations, whenever ye accompliſh your deſigns; whenever ye comply with the cravings of your luſts and appetites; whenever ye give ſcope to vanity, or to anger, or to the luſts of the fleſh; whenever ye take vengeance on your enemies; whenever ye obſcure the merit of thoſe whom ye envy, or of whom ye are jealous; whenever ye ſlander the innocent perſon that ſtands in your way; whenever ye overreach, ſupplant, or ridicule others; deceive them, or abuſe their ſimplicity and frankneſs to the furtherance of your ſiniſter projects. — — And this then is your happineſs, theſe are your pleaſures and ſatisfactions, ye who ſtill lead an unchriſtian, a ſinful life! The certainty, the reality of them I

will not deny; this is a mere matter of ſentiment. But that value they moſt aſſuredly have not, which they ſeem to have; even by your own avowal, when ye properly reflect upon them, judge them without partiality, contraſt them with your wants, and compare together the different, agreeable and diſagreeable impreſſions, which at different times they make upon you.

Neither are they of any continuance or ſtability, theſe ſatisfactions and pleaſures, nor can they be ſo. They are frequently interrupted, frequently diſturbed by unavoidable accidents, frequently give place to languor, frequently are too tardy in their approach for the impatience with which they are expected, frequently do not anſwer to this impatient expectation, or ceaſe and vaniſh ere they have been wholly enjoyed. Neither are they pure and unalloyed. Something is generally wanting, here, or there, in yourſelf, in others, in time, in circumſtances; and how often do not adverſe, appalling accidents intervene; how often are they embittered by diſappointments, how often are they not attended by painful exhauſtion, or diſagreeable ſatiety, or diſguſt and repentance? — — Honourable, worthy of the man and the chriſtian, they are commonly ſtill leſs. For they will ſeldom bear examination, are not always compatible with the ſentiment of deity, and of our immortality; we dare not accurately analyze them, leſt they ſhould greatly loſe by the operation, we rather haſten on to ſome other ſimilar pleaſures than engage in ſerious reflection on the paſt.

paſt. Completely ſatisfying neither are they. For ſooner or later we are ſurfeited of them. They are not ſuitable to every age; we cannot enjoy them at all times, in all circumſtances; we frequently feel, and feel it with concern, that they promiſe more than they perform, that they do not fill all the capacities of man, all the affections of his heart. Harmleſs neither are they always, perhaps ſeldomer than ye imagine. For they hurt yourſelves, rob you of time and inclination and ability for uſefuller occupations, frequently injure your neighbour, your children, your poor and needy brethren, repulſe you from God and from perfection, and are often ſucceeded by upbraidings and ſtings of conſcience. — And if they be even innocent, or however not heinouſly noxious and criminal, what is the ultimate object of theſe pleaſures, the end and aim of this happineſs? — Paſtime! — So you yourſelves pronounce it to be. You have paſſed your time, you ſay, extremely well. So then, if time only paſs imperceptibly away, if ye do but imperceptibly grow older, and faſt approach to death, that is, the end of all theſe pleaſures and ſatisfactions, ye are happy. Can a happineſs however, thus conſtituted, thither tending, be of any great value, can it be extremely covetable?

And what is now on the other hand the happineſs, what are the pleaſures and ſatisfactions, of which you either entirely or for the moſt part deprive yourſelves, ye, who lead an unchriſtian, a ſinful life? At preſent I can only name them, their very name however

ever proclaims their worth. Ye deprive yourſelves of the happineſs of a quiet contented heart, not agitated by inordinate luſts and paſſions, but, at unity with itſelf; — the happineſs of a good, unſullied conſcience, of a bold, ſincere and open carriage in the ſight of God and man; — the happineſs of a life always active and employed in the general welfare, fruitful in good works well-pleaſing to the deity; — the happineſs of completer independence on external, fortuitous objects and events, which at preſent ſo frequently put you into a very different mood from that which you would wiſh to be in, and ſo frequently haraſs you by diſappointed hopes and expectations. — — You loſe moreover the pleaſure, the pure ſatisfaction of meditating on God and yourſelf and your immortality, on the moſt important intereſts of the man and the chriſtian; — the pleaſure ariſing from the conſciouſneſs of an inviolable integrity, of a conſtant progreſs on the path of chriſtian wiſdom and virtue, of an obſervable approximation towards the goal of perfection. — — You at the ſame time throw away the comforts of domeſtic life, which are no leſs various and delightful than blameleſs, and the ſtill greater comforts of devotion, of correſpondence with the deity, the preliminary exerciſes to a ſuperior life and the anticipated enjoyment of its felicity, which ye indeed know nothing of, but which nevertheleſs in all ages men, whom you yourſelves muſt allow to be eminently wiſe, have affirmed to be the nobleſt and moſt ſublime. — All this

this ye deprive yourſelves of, more or leſs, entirely or in part, all ye who ſtill lead an unchriſtian, a ſinful life. And yet theſe joys, theſe kinds of happineſs, are the moſt innocent, the nobleſt of all; are alone perfectly ſatisfying; alone are not attended either by diſguſt or repentance; may be the eaſieſt, the ſafeſt, the oftener, the longeſt enjoyed, are moſtly in our own power; and approach the neareſt to thoſe pleaſures and that happineſs, which we expect in a ſuperior ſtate in the future world! And now contraſt the happineſs that ye enjoy, with that which ye throw away, compare their quality, their intrinſic worth, their duration together, put profit and loſs, enjoyment and want of enjoyment in the balance, and decide yourſelves, which of the two has the preponderance.

Let us next proceed to contraſt troubles with troubles, ſufferings with ſufferings, without however having an eye to thoſe which are common both to the good and the bad, the virtuous and the vicious, by their very nature, and the eſtabliſhed order of things, but merely to thoſe, which are more or leſs proper to either of theſe two claſſes of people. That a truly virtuous chriſtian life has particularly at firſt, its troubles, its ſufferings, is what I ſhall not pretend to deny. It requires ſerioufneſs, attention, exertion of one's faculties, it ſometimes requires laborious, continued practice, to reform and regulate our temper and conduct entirely by the temper and precepts of religion and chriſtianity, We muſt carefully watch over

over ourſelves and the affections of our heart, combat every turbulent luſt and paſſion, ſometimes do violence to ourſelves, abſtain from many things to which we were before accuſtomed, exerciſe ourſelves in many others, which we either did not know or had no reliſh for. We muſt occaſionally on account of our corrected temper and conduct expoſe ourſelves to rude and harſh cenſures or to ſcorn, muſt at times make conſiderable ſacrifices to integrity and virtue, muſt forego certain profits, certain pleaſures, becauſe they claſh with ſuperior duties. We muſt ſubmit our own will entirely to the will of God, look more at the inviſible than at the viſible, and frequently ſacrifice the preſent to the future or our private benefit to the general welfare. Ye may call theſe troubles, ſufferings, burdens; they are ſo to the novices in virtue and in chriſtianity: but ſurely not to the trained chriſtian! for him they convert themſelves into means of perfection, into ſources of the pureſt joy. And can ye affirm the ſame of thoſe which are peculiar to you, ye, who ſtill lead an unchriſtian, a ſinful life; or has not likewiſe your manner of life its particular troubles and ſufferings? And are they not far more various, far more oppreſſive than thoſe which ye wiſh thereby to avoid? What attention to oneſelf and to numberleſs objects and circumſtances does it not require, in order to execute any artful, ſelfiſh, wicked project, for concealing our intentions, or paſſions, and the methods we take for their gratification, for diſguiſing

guiſing ourſelves and retaining the ſpecious appearance of honeſty! How much more numerous and expenſive are the ſacrifices, which the ſervant of ſin is obliged to make to his ruling paſſion, than thoſe which virtue demands of us! How often is he not compelled to put in jeopardy his peace of mind, his honour, his health, his welfare and the welfare of his family, his life itſelf, in order to comply with their tyrannical commands! — And what violence muſt ye not do to yourſelves in the very enjoyment of moſt of your ſatisfactions and amuſements, the principal of your ſocial diverſions! How often does chance and propriety bring you there connected with perſons, that are by no means to your mind! How often do they induce you to do or not to do things, the contrary whereof you had much rather have done! How often muſt you there boaſt of a pleaſure which you do not enjoy, pretend to ſatisfaction and delight while labouring beneath the preſſure of irkſomeneſs and diſguſt! How often ſeem to take intereſt in converſations, in games, in a hundred other objects, which are extremely indifferent or annoying to you! How difficult muſt it often prove to you, to reconcile ſo many oppoſite private views, and to be calm and compoſed or appear to be ſo, amidſt ſo many agitations and exhibitions of envy, of jealouſy, of pride, of vanity, of the ſpirit of domination! — — — And in affairs of far more momentous concern, how greatly are ye loſers, in compariſon of thoſe who lead a truly virtuous, chriſtian

courſe of life! or, which burden is the heavieſt, the burden of the law, of a righteous, equitable law, which we readily obey, and the obedience to which is real felicity; or the burden of a bad conſcience and the dread of that puniſhment which is denounced againſt its tranſgreſſors? Which burden is the heavieſt, the burden of unmerited ſcorn, of a tranſient ridicule; or the burden of inward diſſatisfaction with oneſelf, of ſecret, continually perſecuting reproaches? Which obedience is the eaſieſt, the moſt honourable, the moſt comfortable, the obedience which we pay to the commands of God, the benign and gracious father of all, the commands of Jeſus Chriſt, the mightieſt, moſt magnanimous deliverer and lord; or the obedience which we afford to violent, unbridled, capricious luſts and paſſions and to the fickle and often prepoſterous uſages of the world? Which of the two coſts more pains and toil, to refrain from a vile, iniquitous action; or, after having committed it and thereby produced much confuſion and diſorder within and without us, to repair all this and to ſatisfy oneſelf and others? Which of the two ſuffers moſt, the patient and meek man, who ſtifles his impetuoſity and is always maſter of his temper, or the angry and reſentful who yield to their paſſions, ſlaviſhly follow their impulſes, and afterwards, when they come to reflect are ſorry for what they have ſpoken or done? Which of the two ſuffers moſt, the placable man, who muſt probably uſe force upon himſelf to ſuppreſs his feelings, and

ſincerely to pardon him whom he believes to have injured him, but then, as ſoon as that is over, has thrown off a grievous load from his heart, and can now again rejoice in God and man; or the vindictive and implacable man, who entertains hatred and malice in his boſom, thereby embitters all the charms of ſociety, whenever he falls himſelf, or puts others into a rage, and muſt be ſhy alike of God and man? Which of the two ſuffers moſt, the wiſe man who moderates and ſets bounds to his appetites, directs them always to the beſt objects, and then is ſure of their gratification; or the ſlave of ſenſuality, who gives them free ſcope, cheriſhes them with complacency, and then can ſo ſeldom accompliſh his deſires, is ſo frequently deceived by flattering expectations? Oh how eaſy, how mild is the dominion of virtue and religion, in compariſon of the cruel and oppreſſive yoke of a ſinful, unchriſtian temper and conduct! How much heavier are the burdens borne to the end of his days by the man who leads ſuch a life, than thoſe which he endeavours thereby to avoid, and which ſo ſoon would ceaſe to be burdenſome to him!

Let us, in the laſt place, contraſt proſpects with proſpects, my pious hearers, and there likewiſe ſee on which ſide the preponderance of happineſs or miſery lies. For with the preſent neither the good nor the bad can be thoroughly ſatisfied. The future is more to us than the preſent, hope very often more than enjoyment, apprehenſion more than ſuffering.

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The preſent is a moment: the future is unbounded, and reaches to infinity. — And what proſpects now, what agreeable and what diſagreeable proſpects does futurity open to thee, o thou who leadeſt an unchriſtian, a ſinful courſe of life? What hopes does ſuch a life afford thee? Thou ſlave of ſenſuality or voluptuouſneſs, does it allow thee yet to hope for ten, twenty, thirty years to enjoy a variety of ſenſual pleaſures, yet frequently to gratify thy ſordid luſts and appetites: thou ſlave of avarice, or ambition, does it allow thee yet to add much gold to thy treaſures, or yet to aſcend ſome ſteps of authority and honour: thou vain man, does it allow thee to hope, ſtill frequently to ſhine in companies, to receive applauſe, to excite envy, and to ſatiate thyſelf with the incenſe of praiſe, or adulation: thou revengeful man, does it allow thee to hope ſtill frequently to wreak thy fury on thine adverſary, and ſtill frequently to ſhew by facts thou art not to be affronted with impunity: each of them flatters himſelf with the hope of ſtill for a long time to indulge his propenſities, and to walk in the luſts of his heart, and the delight of his eyes. — — But are theſe proſpects now, theſe hopes, I will not ſay grand and noble, I will not ſay worthy of a rational, an immortal creature, I will only ſay, are they certain and ſure? May one ſafely rely on them? Are they not juſt as mutable and periſhable, as the mutable and periſhable objects on which they are built, and which are one while thus, then otherwiſe, and preſently not at all? And what entirely

entirely different proſpects then open upon thee againſt thy will, and to thy perdition, o thou who leadeſt a ſinful life? What ſeeſt thou in the hours of ſerioufneſs and conſideration, which thou canſt not always avoid, what ſeeſt thou then before thee? An unrelenting death, accompanied with all the horrors of anxiety and remorſe! A tribunal, from the righteous ſeverity whereof nothing can defend thee! Retributions, which allow thee to expect nothing good, but to dread the greateſt calamity, the moſt grievous puniſhment! A ſtate of total, everlaſting deſtitution of all thy former happineſs, and the apprehenſion of an unutterable, long-continued, viewleſs tract of miſery! — And if theſe proſpects now alarm and terrify thee, o man, what hope has thy unchriſtian, ſinful life left for thee? Perhaps the hope ſometime hereafter, in the laſt years or days of thy life, of altering thy life for the better, and ſo of eſcaping future perdition! Perhaps the hope, if thou wouldſt dare to call it ſo, of being utterly annihilated by death, and thereby of avoiding all puniſhment! But how uncertain, how fallacious is that hope of amendment! As inſecure as thy life, which, like the graſs, to-day flouriſhes, and to-morrow fades! As fallacious as ſo many other good reſolutions, which thou haſt conceived in circumſtances far more propitious, with far greater liberty and ſtrength, and not yet put in practice! And how melancholy, how horrible is this hope of annihilation! How deeply muſt the man be immerſed in depravity, how deſpe-

rately wicked and miſerable muſt he be, who builds his tranquillity and his conſolation on the poſſibility of loſing conſciouſneſs and life for ever! — — — And what are now, on the other hand, o man, the proſpects in futurity, the hopes, of which an unchriſtian, ſinful courſe of life deprives thee, and which are the property of the devout, the real chriſtian? Oh how manifold, how glorious! The proſpect of a longer or ſhorter ſpace of life here on earth, in which we may hope to become ever wiſer, ever better, and of approaching ever nearer to perfection; the proſpect of doing and of effecting more and more good, and thereby of continually accumulating additional treaſures for eternity; the proſpect of walking ſafely and quietly the ways of innocence and virtue under the protection of the Almighty, and in full aſſurance of the divine complacency, in conſcious rectitude, at all times and in all circumſtances to have grounds of ſerenity and comfort, ſources of ſatisfaction and joy; the proſpect of never being attacked unprepared by death, and by it to gain infinitely more than to loſe; the proſpect, in ſhort, of an everlaſting ſupremely happy life, where all want, defect, and ſuffering are no more, where every ſuperior capacity has to expect developement, every generous, chriſtian diſpoſition the moſt glorious aliment, every virtuous aptitude a proportionate ſphere of operation, every good and humane action its reward and praiſe. What proſpects! What hopes, my dear friends! How irreparable muſt be

the loſs ſuſtained by thoſe from whom they are raviſhed, to whom they are obſcured by ſin, whom it deprives of theſe hopes, who have every thing to fear from it in futurity!

And now, o thou, who ſtill leadeſt an unchriſtian, a ſinful courſe of life, whoſe ruling ſentiments and affections are ſtill wicked and vain, and who haſt now contraſted the happineſs which thou enjoyeſt with that which thou foregoeſt, the troubles and ſufferings which thou avoideſt with thoſe which thou beareſt, the proſpects and expectations which thou haſt with thoſe which thou art prevented from having; deny it if thou canſt, that the end of theſe things is death, that thy life upon the whole, and compared with the life of the chriſtian, is a wretched and miſerable life, and yet only the commencement of a far more wretched and miſerable life in the world to come: and if thou canſt not deny it, if thou feeleſt the truth of it, and the deſire, the fervent deſire of becoming better and happier, is excited in thy breaſt, oh let not that conviction and that deſire immediately die away, let them accompany thee to thy dwelling, follow thee into retirement, and there grow up into reality and action. A ſinful conduct is inimical to man, is a public nuiſance; for never can we ſin, without waſting and abuſing the faculties and property and time, which we might and ought to have employed in promoting the welfare both of ourſelves and others. Bid adieu then to ſin, which is thy deſtruction, re-

fuſe it thy ſervice, thy obedience for ever. Watch, pray, contend, labour and perſevere, and become progreſſively more zealous, till thou haſt maſtered thyſelf, conquered thy baſe luſts, and corrected and improved thy temper and conduct by the precepts of wiſdom and the goſpel of Chriſt. Conſider the magnitude of the concern: it is about avoiding uttermoſt miſery, it is about happineſs, real, abiding happineſs, and theſe thou canſt never purchaſe too dearly, never too early enjoy, and yet thou canſt nowhere, nowhere find them but on the path of chriſtian virtue and piety! Bleſſed is he who walks that path and perſeveres in it to the end! Satisfaction and hope will accompany him upon it, and its iſſue is joy and felicity.

SERMON XLIII.

The Wiſdom of a religious and virtuous Courſe of Life.

GOD, eternal, inexhauſtible fountain of intellect and wiſdom, lo, we, thy creatures, thy children, come into thy preſence in prayer to thee, the giver of all good gifts, for that underſtanding and that wiſdom, which we are in want of for the accompliſhment of thy will and the promotion of our own happineſs. Thou addreſſeſt us thyſelf by one of thy miniſters: If any of you lack wiſdom let him aſk of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it ſhall be given him. Yes, we feel our want, o Father of Mercies! It is great, it is urgent, it occaſions us too frequently to decline far, far from the paths of rectitude, of virtue, and of happineſs! Ah do thou ſupply our want. Grant us the light and the warmth, the juſt perceptions and the good, religious ſentiments in which we are ſtill defective, in order to be thoroughly intelligent and wiſe in heart and life. Give us thoroughly to underſtand, what real wiſdom is, on what path we are to ſeek and to find it, how we may ſecure to ourſelves its poſſeſſion for ever, and grant that we may

then diligently ſet about and proſecute our reſearches after it, untill we have found it and made it our own. Aſſiſt us alſo now in reflecting calmly and ſeriouſly on this ſubject, and beſtow a bleſſing on our reflections; that, in this as in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy name, and finally by thy mercy obtain everlaſting life, which thou haſt promiſed us as the confeſſors and votaries of thy ſon Jeſus, in whoſe name, and in firm reliance on thoſe promiſes, we further call upon thee; ſaying, Our father, &c.

JOB, XXVIII. 28.

And unto man he ſaid: Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom; and to depart from evil is underſtanding.

EVERY one, my devout audience, would gladly be reckoned wiſe; and though every one does not eſtimate the praiſe of wiſdom according to its full value and prefer it to every other praiſe, yet no one is abſolutely indifferent to it. Even he who acts fooliſhly, would ſeem to be wiſe. To this end he either endeavours to conceal his fooliſh undertakings and actions from the eyes of the intelligent, or to impute to them ſuch grounds and views, as may give them a certain colouring of wiſdom. This is founded in our nature, my pious hearers. We reſpect, we love, whatever is reſpectable and amiable, when once we know it. Whoever therefore calls our attention to what

what is eminently reſpectable and amiable, whoever teaches us to know and to eſteem wiſdom, whoever ſhews us wherein it conſiſts, whereby it is ſeen, how we way juſtly bear and maintain the appellation of wiſe perſons, we ſhould take for a friend who means us well, for a benefactor to whom we owe much gratitude. Religion, my pious hearers, will perform the office of ſuch a friend and benefactor, ſhe will lead us to the knowledge and to the poſſeſſion of true wiſdom, ſhe will make us wiſe both for the preſent and the future life. And for this ſhe is perfectly qualified. The wiſdom which ſhe teaches us, is not vain, idle ſpeculation, not pompous pedantry, not the ſcience of objects that are above our comprehenſion, or beyond our ſphere of operation and are by no means connected with our happineſs. No, it is entirely practical, applicable to all ſituations and occurences of our ordinary courſe of life, connected with all our affairs and tranſactions, not calculated to render us learned, but intelligent, good, contented and happy. He that ſtudies and practiſes this wiſdom, may not be able indeed to anſwer numberleſs queſtions of curioſity or impertinence, to ſolve many difficulties in the material and the intellectual world, but every truth that is neceſſary and uſeful to him he will eaſily diſcover and retain, he will ſafely chuſe between good and ill, do in every caſe what is beſt and moſt expedient, and every ſtep he takes, will carry him nearer to the true end of his being. In ſhort, the wiſdom which reli-

gion recommends and imparts to us, is a virtuous, godly courſe of life, agreeable to the laws and to the ſpirit of chriſtianity. He who leads ſuch a life, is truly, is eminently intelligent and wiſe, even though his perceptions and knowledge in all other reſpects be ever ſo confined, even though he ſhould be totally deſtitute of whatever elſe is called wiſdom, ſcience and erudition. The fear of the lord, ſays religion to us in our text and in ſeveral other places, the fear of the lord, that is wiſdom, and to depart from evil is underſtanding!

Let us therefore from theſe words conſider the wiſdom of a virtuous and godly life, or ſhew, that the perſon who leads ſuch a life, thinks and acts with true wiſdom. A conſideration, which may prove the more ſalutary to us and free us from the more baneful prejudices, as we are ſo apt to take ſuch an one, who in his judgments and in his conduct ſtrictly adheres to the precepts of religion and chriſtianity, for a fool, and to laugh at him as one diſordered in mind. Let us therefore in a few particular inſtances ſee what wiſdom is, and whether it ſuits the character of the man who is a chriſtian in heart and life. Each of you, my pious hearers, after having granted any degree of attention to the ſubject, will be qualified to judge of it, whether he be learned or unlearned, wiſe or unwiſe.

It is in the firſt place wiſdom, this you will all allow, it is wiſdom, to judge rightly of what we are highly intereſted in knowing; to take every object

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for what it is, and for nothing elſe; to expect from any object no more than what it is able to afford, to hope or to fear from any object no more than it can profit or hurt; to view and to treat every object agreeably to its real quality, its intrinſic worth, its proper ſignation. It is therefore wiſdom to take the good for good, the bad for bad, the little for little, the great for great, the tranſitory for tranſitory, the undecaying for undecaying, ſemblance for ſemblance and reality for reality, and then to treat what we hold to be bad, to be little, to be tranſitory, to be ſemblance, altogether differently from that which we know to be good, to be great, to be undecaying, to be real. But can ye refuſe to allow this wiſdom to the man who regulates his thoughts and conduct by the dictates of virtue and the precepts of chriſtianity? Who judges more juſtly of the worth of things than he? Whoſe affections, efforts, actions are more agreeable to it than his? Who ſeeks and avoids, who loves and hates, who hopes and fears, who rejoices and grieves upon firmer and juſter grounds than the friend of virtue, than the chriſtian? In his eyes nothing is good, nothing great, nothing reſpectable and covetable but what is ſo likewiſe in the ſight of God, what God alſo wills and approves, what conducts us to God, approximates us to him, and renders us more ſuſceptible and worthy of his complacency and his fellowſhip. In his eyes however likewiſe nothing is bad, nothing little, nothing odi-

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ous or deteſtable, except what is at ſtrife with the eternal laws of truth and order, with the laws of God and his ambaſſador Jeſus Chriſt, what undermines and deſtroys real, intrinſic perfection, permanent happineſs in himſelf and others. — Virtue, progreſſively purer, ſuperior virtue, ſimilarity with Chriſt, ſimilarity with God, is the ſovereign good after which he ſtrives. Sin, vice, moral ſervitude, and the miſery thence flowing is the only real evil that he knows and ſhuns. Juſtice and beneficence, to conceive, to intend, to contrive, to effectuate good, is his greateſt delight. To be ſurprized into faults, to be hurried away by paſſion, to miſs or to let ſlip or to miſemploy the opportunity and loſe the ability for doing good, is what grieves and troubles him more than the privation of ever ſo many wordly goods and outward advantages. — To diſpleaſe God and to recede from him, is what of all things he moſt dreads: to pleaſe him, to ſecure his approbation, to keep always near him, is that for which he moſt fervently longs and on which he principally builds his hopes. — To him wealth, honour, rank, ſtation, power and authority are never ultimate objects, never poſſeſſions, that on their own account deſerve to be eſteemed and ſought. To him they are only means and incentives and inſtruments, for putting himſelf and others in action, for levelling to himſelf and others the road to ſuperior perfection and happineſs. Truth and virtue are to him in any ſtation, in any dwelling, under any garb, in any ſhape reſpectable; and

and no elevation, no palace, no external ſplendour, no borrowed luſtre can ſcreen folly and vice from his contempt. — — Never does he in ſhort promiſe himſelf from tranſitory objects unfailing advantages, never from terreſtrial, crumbling poſſeſſions pure and unmingled delights, never conſider what is lent him for only a ſhort, precarious time, as his property, never rely on objects that cannot avail him any thing in death and after death, never prefer the temporal to the eternal, that which endures but a moment, to that which never ends, never expect from the creatures, what is only in the power of the creator. But, from him, the Eternal, the Immutable, he expects pure good, all the good of which he is ſuſceptible; him will he truſt for all things, for far more than at preſent he can deſire or comprehend. Thus does the virtuous man, the chriſtian, think and judge concerning the value of things. Thus is he diſpoſed towards them, And muſt not this inward ſtate of mind be real wiſdom?

To proceed. It is wiſdom, my pious hearers, to act upon well-tried, ſound and firm principles; to have a definite and worthy aim and reſolutely to purſue it; to know the proper end of our being, to have it conſtantly before our eyes, and to judge and treat all elſe in reference to its ſituation towards it. While the fool or the ſinner, for whoever is the one is alſo the other, while therefore the fool or the ſinner is inclined one day thus and the next otherwiſe: follows

lows now theſe and then different maxims and rules of conduct, is one while aiming at theſe, and ſhortly afterwards at quite oppoſite purpoſes, acts now like a rational, immortal being and preſently like a mere ſenſual, animal creature: the wiſe man is always conſiſtent with himſelf, has always the ſame ſtandard in his hand, always the ſame object in view and walks always the ſame way, in order that he may arrive at it. And ſuch a wiſe man is undoubtedly he who in thought and life purſues the dictates of virtue and chriſtianity. He is not the puppet either of his own or other men's paſſions, not a reed that is ſhaken to and fro by every wind, not a weak, blind repeater and imitator of what others ſay and do, not the ſlave of accident, adopting the tone as it were of every book that falls into his hands, of every company in which he happens to be, of every faſhion that comes out, of every fortunate or unfortunate event that occurs to him, and is thus perpetually betrayed into errors and inconſiſtences. No, he has eſpouſed the party of virtue and chriſtian rectitude on mature deliberation and from inward conviction, and adheres immoveably to it; let the judgments that others paſs upon it, and the changes in his outward circumſtances be what they may. The brilliant goal to which God by Jeſus Chriſt has called him, the bleſſed immortality, the everlaſting rewards which he holds out to him by this his ambaſſador, are in his eyes ſo grand, ſo glorious, ſo covetable, that he never entirely loſes ſight of them, and all that may draw him backwards

backwards from them he accounts as loſs, whereas all that may help him on his progreſs towards them, he reckons as gain and felicity. He has, from free choice and clear perception, taken the path of chriſtian rectitude, as the direct and ſureſt way to that goal, and walks along it boldly and ſteadily, whether he be accompanied by many or by few. As he goes however he diſcerns the footſteps of his captain and anteceſſor Jeſus Chriſt, which aſſuredly will not lead him aſtray, which muſt infallibly guide him to the ſummit of perfection and happineſs. To follow him, to acquire perpetually a nearer reſemblance to him; to exerciſe himſelf here in virtue; to learn to think and act more and more uſefully to mankind; to evolve and ſtrengthen his faculties and endowments by the beſt, the faithfuleſt application of them, and thus to become capable of a ſuperior, a better life and a greater activity: he holds to be his true, his proper deſtination, to this he has a conſtant regard in whatever he does and forbears to do, acquires and abandons, enjoys and ſacrifices; and thereafter he judges of progreſs and reſiſtance, elevation and meanneſs, wealth and poverty, health and ſickneſs, life and death. Thus is he conſtantly true to his principles, is ſtedfaſt and immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, becauſe he knows that his labour will not be in vain.

It is thirdly wiſdom, my pious hearers, not to exert one's powers in vain or on a bare venture, not to think of attaining one's ends without uſing the

proper means, much leſs to uſe ſuch means as have a contrary tendency and put us farther from that attainment; therefore to ſeek perfection, ſatisfaction, happineſs where they are really to be found, there to ſeek them in that degree and proportion, in which we may reaſonably hope to obtain them; to accept therefore with gratitude the good that we may have and enjoy, cheerfully to enjoy it and faithfully to uſe it, though it be imperfect and might be better. — And likewiſe this wiſdom, my dear friends, certainly belongs to the man who regulates his life by the precepts of virtue and chriſtianity. He works not at random. He knows in whom he may believe, whom he may truſt, on whom he may rely, of whom he may look for aid and relief, from whom he may expect approbation and reward. He never employs his abilities in vain, as long as he employs them as duty and conſcience enjoin, becauſe his grand concern is, not ſo much the external benefit he acquires, or the greater effects he produces around him, as about the beſt uſe of his faculties and about the accompliſhment of the divine will. If he fulfil the will of his heavenly father by the practice of juſtice and beneficence, he has no reaſon to account any pains, any labour, any expenſe of time, any exertion of his powers, to be thrown away, let the preſent and viſible conſequences be what they may. For he ſeeks his perfection and happineſs not in the tranſitory, periſhing objects that are without him, which belong not to himſelf and cannot always continue

tinue his, not in wealth, not in the honour of men, not in a luxurious, voluptuous life; but he ſeeks them in himſelf, in the dictates of his immortal mind, in the virtuous and devout ſentiments of his heart, in the conſciouſneſs of good actions, in his cloſer connection with God, the original fountain of life and felicity, in his intimate fellowſhip with Jeſus, the chief and lord of all the pure in heart: and there he may continually find and actually does find it, whether moreover he be rich or poor, high or low, perform much or little in the world, produce greater or leſs alterations and effects around him. He withal expects no ſuperhuman perfection, no entirely pure and uninterrupted happineſs; but only the perfection and happineſs that is adapted to his preſent ſtate: and thus he accepts and enjoys that advantage which he receives, that ſatisfaction which God grants him, that ſucceſs with which he crowns his efforts, with a glad and grateful heart, and never allows the thought that it might be ſtill greater, ſtill purer, ſtill more perfect, to obſtruct him in the enjoyment of it.

He is fourthly by every man's confeſſion wiſe, who has the art of adapting himſelf to all circumſtances, of conforming to all events, of being content in all viciſſitudes: he therefore who beholds the objects, the perſons, he is connected with, the events and accidents that befall him, as they really are, and takes and treats them accordingly, and not as he wiſhes or as others wiſh they might be, and not as he imagines or as others imagine they ought to be. And who, my dear

dear friends, who thinks and acts ſo wiſely, if the virtuous man, the chriſtian does not? Will he fret and fume and be excited to impatience and murmuring about objects that are not in his power, which depend on ſuperior laws unknown to him? Will he require that the great ſhould be regulated by the little, the whole by one particular inconſiderable part, thouſands by one, that all the viciſſitudes which happen in the world or even only among his acquaintance and friends, ſhould coincide with his wiſhes, that they ſhould revolve round him as their centre, all relate to him, all be at his command, all reſpect his perceptions and his inclinations as their rule and ſtandard? Will the virtuous man, will the chriſtian, I ſay, require ſuch incongruities? He, who deems all the circumſtances, all the connections in which he is, to be conſequences of divine arrangements and diſpenſations, and conſiders all that happens and does not happen, in its dependence on the will of the ſovereign ruler of the univerſe? He, who ſo ſenſibly feels the narrow limits of his perceptions and powers, who thinks ſo modeſtly of himſelf and of his merits and claims, and is animated by ſuch an univerſal, diſintereſted benevolence, ſo generous and cordial an affection for all mankind? He, who with ſuch conviction perceives and thinks, that in the ſtate of diſcipline and probation in which he lives at preſent, all, the evil as well as the good, the adverſe as well as the agreeable, may be profitable and ſalutary to him? No, even in theſe reſpects he palpably ſhews that virtue and religion have made

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him wiſe. He will acquieſce in whatever depends not on him, but on God and on the order of things eſtabliſhed by him; correct and amend himſelf, when he cannot correct and amend that which is without him and around him; had rather regulate himſelf by others and prevent them by kindneſs and complaiſance, than from pride and inſolence and after all in vain, require them to do ſo by him. In a word he will, in whatever befalls himſelf and others, revere the diſpoſal of the All-wiſe and All-bountiful, will confeſs that whatever God decrees concerning him, is righteous and proper and be ſatisfied with all his arrangements and diſpenſations. Thus will he be able to boaſt with the apoſtle: "I have learnt, in whatſoever ſtate I am therewith to be content: I know both how to be abaſed, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am inſtructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to ſuffer need. I can do all things through Chriſt which ſtrengtheneth me."

It is fifthly wiſdom, my pious hearers, to be ready to ſuffer a petty loſs in order to prevent a greater, readily to relinquiſh a ſmaller tranſient pleaſure, readily to let ſlip an inferior advantage, in order thereby to ſecure a greater and more durable pleaſure or advantage; therefore to look not only at the preſent, but alſo at the future, to endeavour even now to render ourſelves ſuſceptible and worthy of the benefits that we deſire and expect hereafter, and rather to prevent the evil which we dread,

than allow it firſt to ariſe, to ſpread and eſtabliſh itſelf, and then be forced to ſtruggle againſt it, uncertain whether we ſhall ever get the better of it. And likewiſe here that perſon who thinks and lives virtuouſly and chriſtianly, acts with particular wiſdom. He looks more at the inviſible than at the viſible, more at the future, which endureth for ever, than at the preſent, which is of ſo precarious and ſhort a duration. Ready to relinquiſh any temporal advantage, any ſenſual gratification, any outward pre-eminence, whenever ſummoned to it by duty and conſcience, he would rather loſe all, rather let them all ſlip by him, than ſuffer damage in his ſoul, than forfeit the complacency and the favour of his God and his pretenſions to the felicity of the future world. No ſacrifice that he makes to God and virtue, is loſs in his eyes, however expenſive in itſelf. He with Moſes has reſpect unto the recompenſe of the reward and knows, that the ſufferings of this preſent time come into no conſideration if compared with the glory that hereafter awaits the victor. This glory, this real, permanent advantage he ſeeks already to ſecure, to render himſelf even now continually more capable and worthy of their future enjoyment, and even at preſent to confirm himſelf in thoſe ſentiments and affections, and to acquire thoſe good habitudes which are ſuitable to that ſuperior ſtate. — — On the other hand, my pious hearers, he waits not till ſin has cheated, enervated, overcome him, till it has brought him to the brink of ruin,

ruin, before he thinks of contending with it, and of liberating himself from the calamities it has brought upon him. No, he avoids iniquity in its first commencement, shuns the source of the calamity he dreads, and exposes himself to no danger which it is more easy for him to avoid than to conquer. He therefore postpones not his amendment, because he knows, that it becomes daily more difficult; allows no bad custom and passion to prevail over him, because he knows, how uncertain it is, whether he shall ever quit or controul it when once it has acquired a certain degree of force, and is on his guard against the first step towards vice and bondage, because he can easily foresee, that it would be difficult for him to stop short at this first step, and that he who once enters on that slippery path, is never sure whether and when he shall get out of it again. — When sin holds out to him profit and pleasure, he immediately thinks on the far greater loss, on the far longer torment, on the distress and pain which soon or late are the wages of its infamous drudgery. Whereas when virtue and religion demand sacrifices of him, impose some burdens on him, chasten him by afflictions, he represents to himself the honour and the glorious consequences of persevering rectitude and the greater resemblance with his chieftain Jesus Christ; and thus the prospect of the future always determines him in the choice of the present, and never permits him to chuse anything that does not on the whole tend to his greatest advantage, ne-

ver to do any thing that he ſhall ever have cauſe to lament. And muſt not ſuch a conduct be judicious, be wiſe?

No leſs aſſuredly is it laſtly ſagacity and wiſdom, my pious hearers, when a man determines to be and to do no more than he can and ſhould be and do, and when he readily and cheerfully is and does that which he can and ſhould be and do; when he therefore at every time, in every office, in every ſituation, in every place does and effects that good, which at that time, in that office, in that ſituation, in that place he can do and effect, and never is idle or diſpirited becauſe perhaps in other circumſtances, in another poſt, in another place, at another time he could do more good. And likewiſe this wiſdom, my dear friends, particularly belongs to the man who is a truly pious chriſtian in thought and life. The ſentiment of his dependence on God, and filial obedience towards his heavenly father govern his inclinations, as well as his actions. How then can he ever think of being and doing, any thing but what God, his father and his lord, determines that he ſhould be and do? No, it is God, thinks he to himſelf, the All-wiſe, the All-gracious it is, who has allotted the meaſure of my capacities and powers, aſſigned me the poſt which I occupy in his dominion, and placed me in the connections, in the circumſtances, which are favourable or not favourable, which keep me back or impel me forward; it is God, who cauſes me now to meet with the aſſiſtance and relief, now the

the oppoſition and obſtructions, whereon the better or the worſe ſucceſs of my efforts and exertions depends. He has fixed the ſcope and limits to my ſphere of operation, ſettled my relations towards others, and the relations of others towards me, and the relations of all towards the whole, and determined the influence which I ſhould have or not on the welfare and the fortunes of all. Muſt not he be the beſt judge of what I am fit or not fit for, how much or how little he may commit and entruſt to me, to what purpoſes he can employ or not employ me? No, it is childiſh petulance to cavil at his wiſe adminiſtration, to affect to be more, to do more, to operate more, than my faculties, my poſt, my circumſtances will allow. Would he, the ſovereign ruler of the univerſe, that theſe or thoſe remarkable alterations and improvements, which I wiſh to effect and yet cannot effect, among mankind, my brethren, ſhould take place, he never is deficient in means and inſtruments to that end, whenever the beſt, the propereſt time for it is arrived. Of me he requires no more than that I deal faithfully in thoſe tranſactions which he has entruſted to me, that I labour in full affiance in his providence, and leave to him the reſult of my labour. If I execute the buſineſs which he has commiſſioned me to do, if I be that which he deſigns that I ſhould be, I am ſure of his good pleaſure, I advance progreſſively to ſuperior perfection, he will hereafter entruſt more to me, and then ſhall I plainly perceive, that I even at preſent have not laboured

in vain. Thus thinks the virtuous man, the chriſtian; and is not this to think ſagaciouſly and wiſely?

Yes, my dear friends, let us conſider the matter on whichever ſide we will, the declaration in our text ſhines to our eyes as an undeniable, a divine truth: God himſelf has ſaid to man, the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom, and to depart from evil is underſtanding! Yes, it is certain, that a virtuous, godly, chriſtian life is an eminently wiſe and intelligent life; certain, that he alone deſerves the appellation of a real ſage, who adopts ſuch a temper and conduct! Happy he, who inwardly feels and firmly believes this truth, and, being now inflamed with the moſt ardent aſpirations after this wiſdom, implores it of him who alone can give it, and who freely beſtows it on every one who is earneſtly ſolicitous about it! Thrice happy the man, who finds this wiſdom, the man who acquires this underſtanding! "The merchandiſe of it is better than the merchandiſe of ſilver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs; and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her!" Oh may ye all, my dear friends, prize according to her real worth, this heavenly wiſdom, ſeek her with unremitted ardour, happily find her, and in her poſſeſſion enjoy that entire felicity which ſhe procures to her friends, both in the preſent and in the future world! Amen.

SERMON XLIV.

The Beauty and Honour of a chriſtian Temper and Conduct.

MOST gracious God, bountiful parent, humble as may be the ſtation which we occupy among thy intelligent creatures capable of felicity, yet our deſtination is ſublime. We are not to remain at this inferior ſtage, are never to go backwards, but always to advance, continually to become more perfect and happy, and thereby continually to approach nearer to thee, the primeval fount of perfection and felicity. In thy benignity thou haſt made us capable of a perpetually progreſſive, an everlaſting growth in knowledge, in wiſdom, in virtue, in generally uſeful activity, in reſemblance with thy image and repreſentative Jeſus Chriſt. And what motives, what encouragements to perpetual, unwearied progreſs on the paths of chriſtian perfection haſt thou not given us! Security, repoſe of mind, pure pleaſure, ſuperlative delight, ſubſtantial honour, undecaying renown are our ſure attendants on theſe paths; the aſſurance of thy ſuperintendance and thy loving kindneſs, and the conſolation of a good conſcience render our courſe on them eaſy and pleaſant; and at the end of our carreer the crown of the conqueror ſparkles before us, the

prize of everlaſting life. Oh that we were all of us perpetually mindful of our grand deſtination, and inflamed by a noble ambition, ſtrove conſtantly more completely to obtain it! Do thou thyſelf, o God, by thy good ſpirit, direct our ambition to the beſt, the worthieſt objects, to wiſdom and virtue, to intrinſic ſpiritual perfection, to that which is and will for ever continue to be honourable in heaven as well as upon earth. Bleſs in this view the conſiderations that are now to employ us, and grant that they may contribute ſomewhat to the refinement of our ſentiments and to the amendment of our conduct. For theſe things we pray thee, in firm reliance on the promiſes given us by thy ſon Jeſus, and adore thee farther in his name and comprehenſive form of words: ſaying, Our father, &c.

PHILIPP. iv. 8.

If there be any virtue, and if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things.

AMBITION is natural to us all; as natural as the endeavour after ſuperior perfection, after the enlargement of our ſphere of action, after greater influence on the whole. We are deſirous that others ſhould entertain a good opinion of us, place great confidence in us, have a high eſteem for us; becauſe we know, how much influence their judgment concerning us and their diſpoſition towards us have upon

upon our welfare, upon our uſefulneſs and upon our happineſs. Even the judgment of more diſtant, unknown perſons and otherwiſe unconnected with us in any bond of friendſhip, is not indifferent to us. The very idea, that people will ſpeak well of us after our death, will make mention of our deſerts in behalf of ſociety, will recollect our good example, will enjoy with gratitude the fruits of our labour, and will perhaps more than once wiſh for us back again in our terreſtrial ſphere; even this idea how powerfully does it not operate on numbers of perſons! To what ſacrifices, to what achievements, to what acts of heroiſm has it not frequently impelled them! What dangers has it not taught them to deſpiſe! With what ardour has it not inflamed them for the cauſe of truth, or of liberty, or otherwiſe for the public good! — As ſurely however as ambition is natural to us, ſo ſurely is it harmleſs in itſelf: for, whatever is natural to us, proceeds from God, and whatever proceeds from God, is right and proper. Here, as in ſo many other caſes, my pious hearers, every thing depends on the direction of our natural inſtincts and affections, on the means whereby we ſeek to gratify them, and on the uſe that we make of them. — Ambition may abſolutely become an exceedingly corrupt and deſtructive paſſion, — and how often has it not become ſo, how often does it not daily become ſo! — namely, when we ſeek our honour in imaginary, frivolous, empty, tranſient diſtinctions, when we ſeek it by the violation of our duty

duty and our conſcience, when we ſacrifice to it the tranquillity, the welfare, the legitimate ſatisfaction of our brother, when we purloin it by lies, by flattery, when we acquire it not by fair means, not by real merit in behalf of the community, but by artifice and knavery, or when we make uſe of it, to the annoyance of our neighbour, to the advancement of ſelfiſh and covetous projects and deſigns. It is then a corrupt and criminal paſſion: we then ſeek our honour in our ſhame, and employ that which might and ſhould have rendered us extraordinary benefactors to mankind, to their detriment and ruin. — Far be it from us, my dear friends, to cry up ſuch an ambition! But juſt as far be it from us, entirely to reject that appetite, the abuſe whereof we are cenſuring! No, generous ambition is neither diſapproved by ſound reaſon, nor condemned by chriſtianity rightly underſtood. On the contrary, chriſtianity would likewiſe excite and refine this inſtinct of our nature, evolve and fructify this germ of good ſentiments and great actions. It promiſes to "them who by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life." It calls to us by the apoſtle in our text: "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things," ſtrive after theſe things. And in fact, my friends, he that follows the precepts of chriſtianity, he that ſubmits to be actuated and governed by its ſpirit, walks the way which leads to real, laſting honour, to the pinnacle of fame.

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And that is the very thing, my pious hearers, whereof I wiſh to convince you at this time, and thereby to ſupply ſound aliment and the fitteſt direction to your natural ambition. As I lately extolled to you the wiſdom of a virtuous and chriſtian temper and conduct, it is my intention to-day to repreſent and delineate to you, the honour, the beauty and the glory of ſuch a temper and conduct. In this view, I ſhall firſt ſhew you, that the temper and conduct of the chriſtian friend of virtue is eſſentially beautiful, honourable, glorious; and then, that it actually procures honour and renown.

In order to perceive the inherent beauty and honour of a virtuous, chriſtian temper and conduct, we need only to conſider ſome particular parts of it, and compare it with our inborn ſentiment of what is beautiful, what is honourable and glorious.

It is firſt indiſputably beautiful, honourable, glorious to be concentric with oneſelf and with the laws of truth and order, and to lead a life harmonious in all its parts. Who does not honour the man of ſound and ſolid principles, of judicious and unchangeable ſentiments? The man of whom we know with certainty beforehand, how he will view, judge, treat this or that matter, how he will act in this or that ſituation; the man of whom we can confidently predict: this he will not, cannot approve, will not do, will not neglect; or, that muſt, that will he infallibly do! — — And ſuch an one is the virtuous man, the chriſtian! As he thinks,

ſo he ſpeaks; as he means, ſo he acts; he follows always the ſame principles, has always the ſame objects in view, is always governed by the ſame temper and ſpirit, walks always the ſame path of innocence and rectitude. The love towards God, the love towards Jeſus, the love towards all mankind, which actuates him to-day, actuated him alſo yeſterday, and will actuate him alſo to-morrow. The ſincere, blithe, active devotion, that brings him into the houſe of God, and there fills him with filial reverence for him, with hope and aſſurance, and confirms him in every good purpoſe, accompanies him likewiſe at home, in the companies he frequents, in his occupations and pleaſures. The ſentiment of his dependence on the ſupreme being, with which he accepts every benefit, every comfort from the hand of his heavenly father, animates him likewiſe when misfortunes befall him, and teaches him to receive every affliction, every evil with humble ſubmiſſion from him who gave him the good. That conſcientiouſneſs which guides him in the moſt important affairs of his ſtation, of his office, of his vocation, guides him alſo in every other however apparently unimportant tranſaction with his neighbour. That juſtice and beneficence which to-day is his joy, is alſo tomorrow and every day of his life the delight of his heart and the rule of his conduct. Never can or would he approve folly and vice: they are ſhocking to him at one time as at another, in one place as in another, in one ſhape as in another; always and everywhere

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the degradation and corruption of mankind. Never can and will wiſdom and virtue be indifferent to him: he reveres, he loves them at all times, in every place, in every ſhape, under every garment; they are conſtantly to him the only, the true nobility, the higheſt diſtinction of human nature. Thus is he always at unity with himſelf, always even tempered; his mind, his heart, his behaviour, his inclinations, his actions, his words and his works, his inſide and his outſide, all are in perfect uniſon, all regulated by the ſame principles, governed by the ſame ſpirit, directed to the ſame ends. Can ye, however, my dear friends, can ye poſſibly conceive any moral beauty ſuperior to this? Can ye refrain from acknowledging the perſon of whom this picture is a true likeneſs to be honourable?

It is ſecondly beautiful, honourable, glorious, to ſubdue one's luſts and paſſions and to have the maſtery of oneſelf; for this preſuppoſes a juſt and noble way of thinking, and demands courage, vigour, fortitude. "He that ruleth his ſpirit, ſays the wiſe man, is ſtronger than he that taketh a city," — ſtronger, greater than the hero, who conquers countries and ſubdues nations. For the former has more powerful enemies to contend with than the latter, muſt carry on the conflict by himſelf and not by others, expoſe himſelf to every hardſhip, to every danger, muſt generally make his aſſaults in ſecret, often renew the combat, and is not like the latter ſummoned to the battle by outward circumſtances,

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by preſent ſignal advantages, by imminent danger of death, by inevitable neceſſity, and not equally encouraged in it by the hopes of a near, deciſive victory to crown the remainder of his life with praiſe and glory. No, to the virtuous man, to the chriſtian, who truly anſwers to that name, to him unqueſtionably belongs the precedence over every other hero, and his glory is better founded and more durable than the fame of the conqueror of nations. Powerful as the aſſiſtance is which he may promiſe himſelf from his father in heaven and from his lord and leader Jeſus Chriſt, in the conteſt againſt himſelf and ſin, yet this aſſiſtance does not ſtrike the ſenſes, ſeems often to be dubious, is often long delayed, and only ſupports and ſtrengthens him, who already with all his heart relies upon the Almighty, and truſts as firmly to what he does not ſee, as if he actually ſaw it. However glorious the praiſe of his victory, yet is it ſtill inviſible, ſtill afar off, ſtill rather the object of hope than of enjoyment; and ſo long as he has not yet finiſhed his courſe, has not yet fought out the tedious warfare, never is he entirely free from ſolicitude, never perfectly ſafe from loſing the victor's wreath. With all this, he is ſtedfaſt, intrepid, perſeveres in the conflict, looks more at the inviſible than at the viſible, more at the ſparkling object that is before him, than at the diſtance he has yet to run through. He watches over all the irregular movements that ariſe within him, obſerves the ſeveral outward temptations that threaten him,

him, endeavours to ſuppreſs the former in their birth, combats the latter as ſoon as they appear, and thus he overcomes the world and gains the maſtery over himſelf. His moral chriſtian liberty, the propenſity and the ability to follow his corrected perceptions and ſentiments and in every inſtance to do that which he himſelf knows to be right and proper and for the beſt, that he prizes above all things, that he holds to be the greateſt diſtinction of the man and the chriſtian, that he therefore aſſerts and maintains with all poſſible diligence, and of its inviolate cuſtody he is in the nobleſt ſenſe of the word jealous. Nothing is in his eyes more degrading, nothing more diſgraceful than thraldom, and no ſpecies of it more than the thraldom of vice and ſin. That virtue and chriſtianity have reſcued him from their cruel yoke, that he is become free by chriſtian truth, is his glory and his joy; and now he would rather bear the moſt oppreſſive burden of poverty and ſcorn, rather endure torment and death, than take upon him again thoſe ſlaviſh chains. And muſt not ſuch a frame of temper and mind redound to the honour of the man? Shall not the victory which he has gained over himſelf and the world, be extremely glorious to him? If ye know, my pious hearers, — and who is there that has not had ſome experiences of this ſort? — if ye therefore know, how great the violence with which ſenſual luſts and paſſions act upon mankind, under what various forms, with how many different weapons, in what favour-

favourable circumſtances, with what various auxiliaries from without and from within they make their attacks and purſue their hoſtilities, and how frequently even when they ſeem to be entirely overpowered and defeated, they again raiſe their head and renew the conflict between the ſpirit and the-fleſh; if ye conſider this, how honourable muſt the man, the chriſtian appear to you, who has maintained this warfare, routed theſe enemies, obtained his liberty from the conqueſt, and now can rejoice in the command over himſelf!

It is thirdly beautiful, honourable, glorious to lead a truly beneficent, generally uſeful courſe of life, and willingly to ſacrifice every thing, however coſtly and dear it may be to us, to virtue, to the public weal, to the welfare of his brethren. What extenſive, laſting renown have not ſome of the ſages, heroes and lawgivers of antiquity acquired by ſuch ſacrifices! — How much greater renown, re-echoing through the vaults of heaven, has Jeſus Chriſt acquired, who ventured, abandoned, ſacrificed all for us and gave himſelf up for us to the moſt painful and ignominious death, whoſe whole life, whoſe ſufferings and deceaſe were one continued act of bounty and bleſſing to mankind! And how beneficial, how generally uſeful is not alſo the life of every virtuous man, of every real chriſtian! What a manifold influence muſt not his ſentiments, his diſcourſes, his actions, his example have upon human happineſs, however mean his ſtation, however limited his ſphere!

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And how many generous, magnanimous ſacrifices, eſpecially when providence aſſigns him a ſomewhat ſuperior ſtation, mark the whole tenor of his conduct! In what numerous inſtances does he not neglect his repoſe and convenience, how often his pleaſure, how often honour and reſpect, how often his property, how often the moſt enticing opportunities of revenge, whenever he is called forth by the cauſe of truth and virtue and the beſt intereſts of his brethren! — He could now perhaps, without apprehending either diſgrace or puniſhment from mankind, enrich himſelf or force his way to honours, by particular artifices thought allowable by almoſt all men, or in purſuance of certain falſe, though extremely current rules of prudence gratify his ſenſual luſts and lead a ſoft, luxurious life; and he gives up this wealth, theſe diſtinctions, this voluptuouſneſs, this ſoft luxurious life, rejects them with abhorrence, becauſe they are at enmity with the dictates of virtue and with the ſpirit of chriſtianity. — — Now he might acquire much honour and reſpect from the world, were he to adopt certain maxims, purſue certain plans, join certain undertakings, fall in with the temper of the times or of his countrymen or of his acquaintance; and he voluntarily forgoes this honour, expoſes himſelf to cenſure, to ſuſpicion, to contempt, becauſe his conſcience cannot approve thoſe maxims, thoſe plans, thoſe undertakings, that temper, and he greatly prefers the teſtimony of a good conſcience to the loudeſt burſts of applauſe

that ariſe from error and vice. — — — Now he might recompenſe evil with evil; and repays evil with good: might now make his enemy who formerly injured him, feel the weight of his reſentment; and cauſes him to experience his ſuperiority in power only by greater liberality. — — — He might now, after working ſo long and ſet ſo much good in motion, paſs the remainder of his days in eaſe and retirement; and this eaſe he cheerfully reſigns whenever the benefit of his brethren demands his exertions, whenever opportunities offer for doing more good. — — — — He might now employ the property he has earned by induſtry and application, or the emoluments of the poſt and rank which he ſo worthily occupies, in procuring himſelf finer cloaths, making a grander appearance, diſtinguiſhing himſelf by pomp and magnificence, in cauſing himſelf to be more miniſtered unto, than to miniſter to others; and lo, he employs the greater part of his affluence in works of beneficence, remains modeſt and humble, boaſts, like his lord and maſter, of no outward diſtinctions, rather conceals them, whenever they might offend or dazzle others, and had rather ſerve, than be ſerved. — — — Now he might enjoy pure intellectual pleaſure, extend his knowledge, employ himſelf in ſilent exerciſes of devotion, elevate himſelf by meditation into the future world, which he ſo remarkably approaches; and yet, as ſoon as any duty, any call of humanity, any hope of being uſeful to others ſummons him away, he immediately

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rends himſelf from theſe pureſt of pleaſures, theſe nobleſt occupations, to go and do that which he is bid to do by duty and affection and public utility. Thus is he always ready to ſacrifice everything to virtue, to chriſtianity, to the will of God and his redeemer, to the general intereſt of his fellow-creatures, however dear it might otherwiſe be to him. Thus does he prefer the glory of imitating Jeſus and of being like him a benefactor to his brethren, to every advantage, to every pleaſure, to every other glory. And ſhall not this be ſubſtantial honour, ſhall not this be a venerable character, a venerable conduct?

It is laſtly in the confeſſion of every one, beautiful, honourable, glorious, to ſtruggle with adverſity, with afflictions and tribulations, and not to be overcome in that conflict. Even a heathen philoſopher was in this reſpect compelled to ſay: the virtuous man contending with adverſity, and coming off unconquered is a ſpectacle worthy of the contemplation and complacence of the deity! — And this glorious ſpectacle, if we may be allowed the expreſſion, is preſented by the virtuous man, the chriſtian, not only to his intelligent fellow-chriſtians, not only to ſpirits of a ſuperior order, not only to his lord and chieftain Jeſus Chriſt, but to the omnipotent creator and ſovereign of the univerſe! And in reality, my dear friends, unmerited afflictions, to which we patiently ſubmit, which we bear without murmuring, in which we reſolutely hold out, which we do not endeavour to throw off by any iniquitous, baſe com-

pliances, which we revere as diſpenſations of ſupreme wiſdom and benignity and as means of promoting our perfection, and employ them as ſuch to our improvement: what a dignity muſt not this confer upon the man, upon the chriſtian! What exerciſes, what proofs are they not of his faith, of his confidence, of his integrity, of his hope! How far muſt they not elevate his virtue and his devotion above all ſuſpicion of hypocriſy or of mean ſelf-intereſt! What indubitable teſtimonies do they not afford to himſelf and to others, that he loves God above all things, entirely acquieſces in his will, holds his complacency for his ſupreme happineſs, and is ſtriving after ſpiritual, eternal perfection, with a zeal and ardour that nothing can abate! How muſt he not thus reſemble Jeſus, his great exemplar and forerunner, how capable muſt he thus become of his nearer fellowſhip and his more intimate correſpondence in a better world! — And what light, what a reſplendent luſtre muſt not all this diffuſe over his entire character, over the whole tenour of his conduct, even in the deepeſt abaſement and in the darkeſt night of miſery! A light, a luſtre, which indeed thouſands and thouſands of ſenſual, wordly people entirely overlook, but which no wiſe man and no chriſtian can view without delight, without admiration and profound reverence, and which the Omniſcient himſelf obſerves with complacency! And likewiſe you, my dear friends, when ye hear the ſuffering chriſtian, inſtead of breaking out into impatience

tience and bitter complaints, ſaying: We glory in tribulations alſo; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not aſhamed: when ye hear the ſuffering chriſtian, the chriſtian diſciplined by afflictions, inſtead of reſigning himſelf to deſpondency and corroding grief, exultingly exclaim: Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt? Shall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or ſword? Nay, in all theſe things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. When ye hear, I ſay, the chriſtian in the midſt of afflictions holding this language, and ſee him confirm the veracity of it by facts: can ye well refuſe him your eſteem and reſpect, can ye heſitate in owning his temper and his conduct to be honourable? — And now judge from theſe few particulars as from ſo many examples, whether a virtuous, chriſtian life be not beautiful, honourable, glorious.

This however is not all. Such a diſpoſition and ſuch a life likewiſe confer real honour on the man, tend actually to his fame, procure him actually the eſpecial reſpect of all the wiſe and good; and that as well in the preſent as in the future world.

Generally even in the preſent world. Only in an age entirely corrupt and among thoroughly depraved perſons can contempt be the ordinary attendant on virtue; and in better times and among perſons leſs corrupt it is only ſo, either when we firſt begin to alter our temper and conduct by the precepts of reli-

gion and chriſtianity, and others do not yet rightly underſtand what to make of us, and what they are to think of our converſion, or particularly, if ſtriking weakneſſes, glaring defects ariſing from temperament and education obſcure the luſtre of our virtues, give them a gloomy, forbidding aſpect and ſo impede or contract their beneficial effects. In all other points let the man, who is truly virtuous and chriſtian in heart and life, but ſtrenuouſly perſiſt in his courſe, let his works only ſpeak a few years in his behalf, let his inflexible rectitude do away all ſuſpicion of hypocriſy, his meekneſs and candour all ſuſpicion of pride and the luſt of domination, his humanity and condeſcenſion all ſuſpicion of exceſſive ſeverity, his beneficence all ſuſpicion of ſelfiſhneſs, his modeſty all ſuſpicion of falſe ambition and vanity; who, my dear friends, who whether good or bad, whether his friend or his foe, who will not then highly eſteem, not honour him, not ſtand in awe of his cenſure, not covet his approbation, not reſpect his advice, not court his friendſhip; who would not wiſh to be like him? What ſuperiority will not his temper and conduct give him in the judgment of all that know him, over the man who in ſentiments and conduct is vicious and unchriſtian, though the latter ſhould be never ſo rich, never ſo powerful, never ſo great, never ſo learned! — —

But let him even, as an exception to the general rule, be at preſent deſtitute of theſe advantages, let him by unimputable infirmities of mind or body,

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by unfavourable connections with the reſt of the world, by a conſtitutional propenſity to heavineſs and auſterity, by a ſituation that holds him in obſcurity and narrows his activity, by the ill ſucceſs of his beſt and worthieſt efforts, let him by all theſe remain unhonoured, unregarded, unknown: how greatly will he not hereafter, in the future world, be indemnified for theſe privations! How great will there be the honour, the glory, the pre-eminence of every virtuous perſon, of every genuine chriſtian! There, where nothing but virtue and integrity will avail, where everything will appear in its native form, and be judged according to its inherent worth; there, where the judge of the world will bring to light concealed and unacknowledged goodneſs as well as ſcreened and diſguiſed iniquity, as well diſplay modeſt, baſhful virtue in all her majeſty and beauty, as ſhew inſolent, oſtentatious vice in all its baſeneſs and deformity: there, where he will publicly honour the upright with his approbation, raiſe them for ever above all ſuſpicion, award the palm of victory to every faithful combatant and conqueror, recompenſe every good action and treat as accompliſhed every ſincere intention and endeavour, that without any fault of ours could not be brought to effect; there, where he will aſſign a ſo much higher ſtation to him who has faithfully managed what was committed to him, commit to him ſo much the more, and place him over ſo many more important concerns in his kingdom! How auguſt will there be the triumph of vir-

tue, how reſplendent the glory of the chriſtian! Who then will not wiſh to have regulated his heart and life by the dictates of chriſtianity and virtue? Who then will not value all other diſtinctions, however extolled, as nothing in compariſon of this? Who then will doubt that virtue and piety are the ſole nobility of man, which ſurvives the diſſolution of his body, as well as all the viciſſitudes and revolutions of viſible things; and that nothing is more beautiful, nothing more honourable, nothing more glorious, than to do the will of God and to govern oneſelf entirely by the precepts and example of Jeſus?

If this be a true ſtatement, my dear friends, oh be ye never aſhamed of a virtuous, a chriſtian temper and conduct. Imagine not that ſuch a life lowers the ſpirit of man, that it renders him contemptible, that it is not compatible with a generous ambition. Believe me, it is the ſureſt, the only road to ſubſtantial honour, to unfading renown. It is no leſs beautiful in itſelf than honourable in the ſight of God and of all the intelligent inhabitants of his immenſe domain. And this honour, this fame ye may acquire in every ſtation, in every calling, in every legitimate condition of life. To this end ye need neither be heroes nor conquerors, nor rulers, nor legiſlators, nor reformers. Ye need only be obedient ſubjects of God, faithful adherents and followers of Jeſus; ye need only be truly virtuous, truly chriſtian in thought and deed; only always do that, and with an honeſt and devout heart do that,

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which is really beautiful and honourable and glorious, and then ye may reſt aſſured, that ſooner or later, here or there, honour and glory will be your reward. If then, my dear friends, any generous ambition be ſtirring in your breaſts, oh give it this only, this true, this ſacred direction, ſtrive after this only ſolid permanent glory, after the glory of a truly virtuous and chriſtian temper and conduct, after the glory which God alone can beſtow, that glory which will ſtand the teſt at the day of judgment and retribution and be then ſtill more refulgent. This glory, but no other, is worthy your moſt ſtrenuous, moſt ſtedfaſt exertions, is worth the moſt arduous conflicts, the moſt patient perſeverance in doing and in ſuffering; this glory ye can never buy too dear, never lay its foundations too firm, never too diligently guard it. No, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praiſe of this nature, think on theſe things, ſtrive after them with all your might!

SERMON XLV.

The Felicity of a virtuous and chriſtian Temper and Conduct.

GOD, thou art happy, and the eternal and never failing ſource of all felicity, and haſt decreed that we alſo ſhould be happy, and become happier in continued progreſſion. To this end didſt thou create us; to this end aſſign us an abode adorned with innumerable beauties, and inſtances of thy bounty; to this end haſt deſigned us for ſocial life, for the delights of affection and beneficence; to this end haſt thou made us capable of knowledge, of virtue, of generally uſeful activity, and by theſe ſeveral means of numberleſs kinds of ſatisfaction and pleaſure. To this end haſt thou manifeſted thyſelf to us by thy works, informed us by thy ſon Jeſus of thy will, and given us through him the faireſt proſpects in a better, an eternal world. And certainly we ſhould all be happy if we only with filial docility followed thy gracious paternal intentions, if we faithfully employed theſe preparatives and inſtitutions of thy wiſe benignity, theſe means and ſources of joy and felicity. Yes, the road to happineſs is open to us all, is far ſmoother and eaſier to us than to thouſands and thouſands of other perſons and chriſtians; and if not-

notwithſtanding we miſs that road, and continue wretched, we have only ourſelves to accuſe as the authors of our error and our miſery. Ah God, merciful God, grant us clearly and convincingly to perceive this truth; aſſiſt us in ſeeking our felicity on that way, where alone it is to be found; teach us to conſider virtue and godlineſs, and joy and felicity as inſeparable objects, as objects which always in equal paces advance and increaſe. Bleſs to this end the leſſons of truth, the conſideration whereof is now to employ us. Let not their efficacy be weakened in us by any prejudices and lower affections, but grant that they may produce permanent effects on our hearts. Thus much we now aſk of thee as thy children, truſting in the promiſes given to us by Jeſus, and ſum up all our petitions in that form of words which thy well-beloved ſon did frame himſelf, and has directed all his diſciples to uſe when they pray unto thee. Our father, &c.

PROV. xi. 18, 19.

To him that ſoweth righteouſneſs ſhall be a ſure reward; as righteouſneſs tendeth to life.

THAT virtue and godlineſs render their votaries happy in the world to come, is doubted of by nobody who believes in a future ſtate. But that they do ſo likewiſe in the preſent life, and neceſſarily muſt, is what comparatively but very few chriſtians think and believe. And yet no fact is more certain than this,

this, my pious hearers. Though ſometimes they who would live godly muſt ſuffer perſecution; though ſometimes the ſincere adherents of Jeſus muſt through many tribulations enter into his kingdom; though at particular times and to certain perſons the gate is ſtraight and the way narrow that lead to life: yet theſe are ſo many exceptions to the general rule; or exerciſes and trials, which render mankind outwardly, but not in reality miſerable, or deprive them of ſerenity of mind; or in ſhort obſtacles, that novices in virtue cannot without much difficulty ſurmount, but which do not retard the expert chriſtian on his courſe. No, virtue, religion, chriſtianity are calculated to render us happy, and do actually render us happy, as ſoon as we properly underſtand and practiſe them, and ſubmit to be governed entirely by their ſpirit. Not knowledge, not belief, not amendment, but happineſs, preſent, ſubſtantial happineſs is that to which all their doctrines, all their precepts, all their directions and promiſes tend. We are to acquire knowledge, not merely for the ſake of having it; we are to believe, not merely for believing; we are to become better, not merely for the purpoſe of being better: but all this we are to do, for the ſake of becoming happier ourſelves, and for rendering others ſo likewiſe. Yes, even improvement and virtue are not ultimate ends, but means; not the prize, but the way to the prize. He therefore who thinks himſelf always improving and continually advancing in virtue, always becoming more truly chriſ-

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tian in his temper, and yet remains alike wretched, and yet is never the more placid, never the more contented, never the happier, and never renders others more happy, he either deceives himſelf, by imagining himſelf better, without really being ſo; or muſt bear about with him a ſickly and much diſordered body, or is ſtill under the dominion of ſeveral prejudices and errors, which he has imbibed in his infancy and childhood concerning God, concerning duty, concerning virtue, concerning chriſtianity, concerning felicity. Subtracting the inſtances of ſuch diſtempers, ſuch prejudices and errors, allowing for the times of cruel perſecutions and extraordinary trials, my pious hearers, we may ſafely affirm, that he who in this world knows and enjoys no ſerenity of mind, no ſatisfaction, no pleaſure, no felicity, is alſo not ſuſceptible of them in the world to come. Only we muſt take care not to confound proſperity and happineſs, adverſity and miſery together. The former, proſperity and adverſity, relate ſolely to outward objects, riches and poverty, elevation and meanneſs, health and ſickneſs, and the like. The latter, happineſs and miſery, relate to the repreſentations of the mind, to the feelings of the heart, to the inward condition of the man, and are not neceſſarily aſſociated with the former, may as well ſubſiſt without them as with them. According to this true import of the terms, that maxim ſo commonly adopted, but ſo diſhonourable to religion: the more miſerable here, the more happy hereafter, is in moſt caſes abſolutely

ſolutely falſe. But the converſe of the propoſition properly underſtood is always true: the happier here the happier hereafter; the more innocent, virtuous delight in the preſent, the more capacity for delight in the other world. Yes, my pious hearers, we return to our firſt propoſition, virtue and godlineſs render mankind, ſome few exceptions allowed for, already happy in the preſent life. Where virtue is, there is ſerenity and joy; where real chriſtianity is, there is felicity. This is a truth which has in its behalf the teſtimony of the wiſe and upright of all ages and nations, which is preſuppoſed and aſſerted as undeniable in every page of holy writ, and of which we ourſelves, whenever we earneſtly deſire it, may be aſſured by our own experience. It was already known to the author of the words of our text, although living long before the world was bleſſed by the light and the comforts of chriſtianity. To him that ſoweth righteouſneſs, ſays he, ſhall be a ſure reward, he that purſues a virtuous courſe of life is an exceeding gainer by it; as righteouſneſs tendeth to life; as virtue leads to happineſs.

Oh that I may ſucceed at this moment my dear friends, in thoroughly convincing you of it, and thus teach you to underſtand and to prize religion and chriſtianity on that ſide whereon they muſt appear to us all moſt venerable and moſt amiable! Well then, my pious hearers, let us proſecute our reflections on this momentous ſubject; let us contemplate the felicity of a virtuous and chriſtian temper

and conduct. This felicity is too palpable and too great, for reducing us to the neceſſity of overcharging the picture, and of imputing to it qualities which it does not poſſeſs, or of ſhading and concealing from you others which cannot by any means be ſeparated from it.

No, to this felicity belong firſt neither wealth, nor power and authority, nor rank and ſtation, nor the enjoyment of the accommodations and pleaſures of this terreſtrial life. If the virtuous man, the chriſtian, be in poſſeſſion of ſuch goods and diſtinctions, he indeed derives from them much ſatisfaction, far more real liberal ſatisfaction than any other perſon, who is not of a virtuous and chriſtian temper; but his felicity does not abſolutely depend upon them, it is far more firmly grounded, flows from far purer ſources, he can be deſtitute of all thoſe outward things, and yet be happy, and far happier than moſt of their poſſeſſors are.

Nor leſs on the other hand does this felicity exclude the adverſe events of human life. Of the ſeveral evils that befall mankind as ſuch, the virtuous man has his ſhare in common with his brethren. The numerous hardſhips and burdens, that are connected with ſocial life, the one muſt bear as well as the other, and virtue and godlineſs do not always ſhield even their trueſt votaries from poverty and contempt, from pain and ſickneſs, from troubles and afflictions. But they alleviate to them theſe evils, theſe hardſhips, theſe ſufferings, never allow them to

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ſink under them, and teach them by their means to advance their inward perfection.

In a word, this felicity is not equally great with every virtuous and godly perſon, and the ſentiment or the conſciouſneſs of it is not always alike vivid and ſtrong. The novice in virtue and in chriſtianity is ſeldom capable of that unclouded ſerenity of mind, that ſettled filial confidence in God, that bold and eaſy aſſurance, that inward ſatisfaction in acts of juſtice and beneficence, which are the happy lot of the well-trained and practiſed chriſtian. And even he does not always triumph in his ſucceſs and his accompliſhments; does not at all times diſcern and feel the whole of their worth; and the greater or leſs vivacity in the ſentiment of his felicity is ſubject to various alterations according to the difference of his temperament, of his ſtate of health, of his perceptions, of his ſenſibility, of his external ſituation, his occupations, habits of life, natural contingences, and the like.

In ſhort, the felicity of the virtuous man, of the genuine chriſtian, conſiſts not in a total exemption from whatever falls under the denomination of miſfortune and pain; not in the uninterrupted enjoyment of only pure, unmingled joy; not in one continued lively ſenſation of pleaſure and delight: but it conſiſts in the conſciouſneſs of his integrity, in the aſſurance of the divine complacency, in the contentedneſs of his heart, in a progreſſively eaſier and cheerfuller and uſefuller exertion and application of his

his moral powers, and in the thence ariſing preponderance of agreeable ideas, ſenſations and proſpects, which gradually become greater, and ever more and more eclipſe and efface all diſagreeable ideas, ſenſations and proſpects, ſo as that theſe at laſt come into no conſideration in compariſon with the former.

And this felicity is the indefeaſible property of the virtuous man, the chriſtian; which he already enjoys in the preſent life; which is a certain, infallible conſequence of genuine piety and virtue.

Yes, he is happy, eminently happy, for in the firſt place the ſources of trouble and miſery are ſhut up to him. He is not oppreſſed by the yoke of ſin: he is not degraded and galled by any ſervile chains. No furious, inſatiable paſſions perſecute him: no wicked purpoſes that ſhun the light diſquiet him, no undertakings which threaten him with infamy or puniſhment, no actions which he dares not avow. Neither covetouſneſs, nor ambition, nor vanity, nor envy, nor jealouſy have any torments for him. His pleaſure is never embittered by the pleaſure of his brother, his proſperity is never diſturbed by the greater ſucceſs of his neighbour. His affections and deſires are never directed to unattainable objects, they never exceed the bounds of moderation, and his conſcience never ſmites him with cutting reproaches for his innocent joys. What calamities, what pains, what anxious ſolicitudes, what trouble and ſorrow does he however eſcape by having theſe

ſources of human miſery foreclоſed to him, by not being under the dominion of theſe enemies to human happineſs! No, he is free, by being maſter of himſelf. Order, contentment, ſerenity dwell in his heart. Truth, innocence, humanity ſtamp their ſignets upon all his projects, his undertakings and actions. They can bear the light, the bright effulgence of noon, and ſtand the examination both of friend and foe. His heart condemns him not; his glory is the glory of a good conſcience: and how adapted muſt all this be to confirm him in the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of his felicity, and to procure him perpetually new acceſſions of it!

Yes, he is happy, the virtuous man, the real chriſtian, for he is in the beſt intelligence, in the moſt natural and bleſſed correſpondence with himſelf, and with external things. Truth and order reign within him and without him. He is in regard to outward things, and outward things are in regard to him what they and he reciprocally can and ſhould be together. He is in the beſt intelligence with God. To him God is not an auſtere maſter, not a terrible judge and avenger, but a wiſe, benign regent, a tender and bountiful father. To him his commandments are not grievous, are no conſtraint, not burdenſome but eaſy and agreeable: his worſhip not a hard, laborious ſervice, but a privilege, refreſhment, and felicity; his diſpenſations are not unavoidable and oppreſſive burdens, but ſacred ordinances of ſuperlative wiſdom and goodneſs. Thoughts on God inſpire him not

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with dark forebodings, with confuſion and terror, but with cheerfulneſs, aſſurance and peace; theſe thoughts diſturb and affright him not in his pleaſures, but exalt and refine them. He diſcerns, he feels, he reverences the deity on all ſides, and wherever he diſcerns and feels and reverences him, there he rejoices in him as the father of mercies, the God of all conſolation. — — He is likewiſe in the beſt intelligence with himſelf. He can turn his thoughts inwards without alarm, and has no cauſe to conceal himſelf from his own inſpection. His ſerenity of mind is not founded on ſtupefaction and the forgetfulneſs of himſelf and his condition, but on the conſciouſneſs of his rectitude and the good and godly frame of his heart and life. He is not the ſport of contending appetites and paſſions. His affections and his behaviour are not at variance. He chuſes to do that which he does, and he does that which he chuſes to do. He is willingly that which he ought to be, and requires to be nothing elſe: does willingly that which he ought to do, and wiſhes to do no otherwiſe. He requires neither to treſpaſs the bounds which God has aſſigned him, nor to quit the ſtation to which he has appointed him, nor to diſſolve the ties by which he has knit him to the whole. — For the ſame reaſons he is in a good underſtanding with all nature. No fond wiſhes that it was differently conſtituted and better, no childiſh, proud demands that it ſhould be guided entirely by him, diſquiet his breaſt. All its conſtitutions, energies and effects to

him are right and proper: all the combinations and conſequences of things to him are regulations of the moſt perfect intelligence and conſummate goodneſs. He rejoices in all animate and inanimate creatures, takes an intereſt in every advancement to perfection and in every pleaſure whereof they are ſuſceptible, and praiſes with them and for them the creator and father both of them and of himſelf. This he more eſpecially does in regard to mankind. With all of them he is in a good correſpondence likewiſe. They are to him all brethren and ſiſters, children of the ſame celeſtial parent, creatures together with him, deſigned for immortality and for felicity, who like him are capable of great matters, in whom he perceives, even amidſt their weakneſſes and corruptions, ſtill numerous good qualities, grand, glorious prediſpoſitions, largely promiſing capacities; and as ſuch he values, honours, loves them all, envies none, hates none, injures none knowingly and wilfully, but rejoices in their exiſtence, their deſtination, their abilities, their endowments, their advantages, their happineſs, and finds his pleaſure in the contemplation and promotion of it. And muſt not the virtuous man, the chriſtian, who ſtands on ſuch a good footing with himſelf, with God, with all nature, with all mankind, be eminently happy?

Yes, he is happy, for he enjoys thirdly all kinds of pleaſure and delight of which mankind is capable; and enjoys them all in the due proportion to their ſeparate value, ſo that he has no occaſion to be aſhamed

aſhamed either before God, or before mankind, nor repent the enjoyment of them either in the preſent or in the future world. He enjoys ſenſual pleaſure of various kinds: and which is pure, becauſe it is innocent and confined within the bounds of prudent moderation; it is diverſified and great, becauſe it is connected with piety, with the love of God and man, becauſe his ſenſible, capacious heart takes an intereſt in all that is beautiful and good, and everything is heightened and dignified in his view, that comes from God and is an evidence of his parental providence and kindneſs. — He enjoys intellectual pleaſure, and which is no leſs manifold than inexhauſtible, as manifold and inexhauſtible as the ſources of knowledge and wiſdom which the eternal father has diſcloſed to him in nature, in the ſcriptures, in his own reflections and thoſe of other men, in the fortunes and events that happen to himſelf and to them. — He enjoys the felicity of an active and uſeful life, fruitful in good conſequences and proſpects; and this felicity is renewed and augmented as often as he ſtrews good ſeed among mankind, in ſome way or other promotes truth, wiſdom, virtue, happineſs among them, prevents ſome wicked act, promotes ſome laudable deſign, relieves ſome perſon in diſtreſs, or encourages by his example the feeble and broken ſpirit, ſets the ſluggard in motion and fans the ſpark of life in one that was ready to periſh. — He enjoys the felicity of love, love to God, love to Jeſus, love to all mankind; and this enlarges and warms his

heart, alleviates to him the burdens of life, renders every duty a delight, every ſacrifice a gain, and gives all that he imagines and beholds, a more pleaſing form, a more ſmiling aſpect. — He enjoys domeſtic comforts; and theſe are the more various and excellent, as he has more taſte for artleſs, ſimple nature, for uncorrupted innocence, for the amiable childlike temper, for the frank and unreſtrained diſplay of his thoughts and feelings, for perfect confidence and the unimpeded flow of ſoul. —— He enjoys ſocial comforts; and theſe he never enjoys to the violation or the neglect of his duties, never at the expenſe of his brethren, never ſeeks in the confuſion of thoſe preſent or in the harſh cenſure of the abſent, never allows it to degenerate into riotous, noiſy mirth, and always as readily or even more readily communicates than receives ſatisfaction, they therefore never bring after them painful exhauſtion, never ſatiety and bitter reflections, never uneaſineſs, languor, diſguſt, remorſe and pangs of conſcience. —— He enjoys laſtly the comforts of divine worſhip, the comforts of devotion, the comforts of ſolemn adoration, of prayer and thankſgiving to God, of entire acquieſcence in his will, of filial confidence in his loving kindneſs for the preſent and all the ſucceeding ſcenes of life, comforts of a deep-felt ſenſe of his exiſtence and his love; and theſe comforts are peculiar to the virtuous man, the real chriſtian, which he ſhares in common with ſuperior, more bleſſed ſpirits, with whom he is already near related not only by his ſpi-

ritual, immortal nature, but alſo by his nobler, heavenly ſentiments and affections; and theſe comforts are to him of more value than all others, bring him much nearer to his deſtination, ſweeten to him the enjoyment of all thoſe which duty and virtue permit him to enjoy, and richly indemnify him for the want of all thoſe which he could not enjoy without the violation of duty and virtue. And muſt not the enjoyment of this ſenſual pleaſure, of this intellectual pleaſure, of this regard to an active, generally uſeful life, the enjoyment of this love of God and man, theſe domeſtic, ſocial comforts, and theſe comforts of divine worſhip, be felicity, eminent, never-failing felicity?

Yes, he is happy, the chriſtian, who actually and entirely thinks and lives like a chriſtian; for his felicity is not evaneſcent, not confined to ſtated ſeaſons and practices, not dependent on particular and diſtinct occupations and pleaſures and circumſtances. It will coincide with whatever he does and whatever betides him, with every condition in which he happens to be; and is no leſs diverſified than his occupations, his exigencies, his engagements, his emergences, and the other viciſſitudes, to which he is ſubject here below. Wherever he comes he brings with him the capacity for being happy, and everything evolves it and yields him freſh motives and means to the actual enjoyment of felicity. He is happy, while he is at work and attending to his buſineſs, for his buſineſs is lawful and profitable to his

brethren, and he is fond of his work, it is to him the ordinance of God, the incentive and opportunity to exerciſe and exhibit his faculties and talents, ſteps to higher perfection. — He is happy, when recruiting his ſpirits after his work, for his recreations are harmleſs and liberal, he has earnt them by his induſtry, can enjoy them with a quiet conſcience, with cheerful filial regard to God, and rejoices by anticipation in the benefits which his renovated powers will give him courage and ſtrength to procure. He is happy when his buſineſs goes on with ſucceſs, for it is God, his gracious father in heaven, who thus ſtrengthens and bleſſes him, and thereby enables him to proſper and to bleſs others. He is however happy, when he meets with reſiſtance and impediment to his undertakings, for he knows, that he is thus exerciſed and by exerciſe becomes wiſer and ſtronger, that he muſt likewiſe ſow upon remote, uncertain expectations and learn obedience and ſubmiſſion, and that he can never exert his faculties entirely in vain, even though the proximate conſequences of that exertion be not thoſe which he firſt wiſhed or endeavoured to effect. He is happy, the virtuous man, the chriſtian, when he is in ſolitude, when all around him is huſh and ſtill, for in his ſoul dwells peace; the groundwork of his happineſs is within him: God, the eternal, inexhauſtible ſource of it, is nigh him; truth and wiſdom and virtue are his inſeparable companions; the retroſpect on the paſt confounds him not; the conſideration of the preſent

ſent diſquiets him not, and the proſpect of futurity alarms him not. He has no need to ſhun either himſelf or his reflections, and never more triumphs in his own exiſtence and in the exiſtence of his God than in ſuch hours of ſolemn ſtillneſs. He is however likewiſe happy when he is in company, for thither he carries with him no wicked projects, no views and intentions that he has any reaſon anxiouſly to conceal, there he is neither tortured by envy, nor jealouſy, nor hatred, nor malice, there he is actuated by pure benevolence and affection and candour, there he rather notices the good than the bad, and amidſt all the entertainment and diverſion he finds never entirely loſes ſight of his own deſtination and that of his brethren. He is happy when in proſperity, for it intoxicates and dazzles him not, is no ſnare to him, detains him not from duty and virtue, entices him not away from him who beſtowed on him this property and theſe preferments, but brings him ever nearer to that good and gracious being, renders his obedience to the great father of all continually more joyful, and ſupplies freſh aliment to his zeal in doing good to others. He is however likewiſe happy, when afflictions and misfortunes come upon him, for he has the ſagacity to deem of them aright, the piety to revere them as the will of his almighty parent, the patience to bear them, the courage and reſolution to hold out under them, the ability and virtue to apply them properly, the well-grounded hope of becoming better and

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more perfect by them. Yes, he is then even happy, when the hour is come that he muſt die, for death to him is not annihilation, not privation of his whole ſtock of happineſs, not degradation to a lower ſtage of being, but the paſſage into a better life, progreſs to his deſtination, the exchange of an inferior for a ſuperior felicity, elevation to a higher ſtage of exiſtence and perfection. He is threatened by no puniſhments in the future world, the moſt glorious rewards there preſent themſelves to his view. — And how happy, how unſpeakably happy is he then, when he has ſtood out the laſt ſtruggle and is gone over into the ſtate of retribution! Thither follow him all his good, chriſtian diſpoſitions and works. There will his faith be changed into ſight, his hope into fruition. There he reaps the fruits of his victory, the reward of his righteouſneſs. There he proceeds farther in all that he was here ſo zealous to attain, onward — comes nigh to all that he here particularly revered and loved, and after which he longed with all his ſoul. There he is at the wiſhed for goal of his firſt, laborious career, and now ſees ſhining before him a far ſuperior prize, to which he can approach far more quickly, far more ſurely, on a far more even road, and which when he has once attained it, will carry him on to ſtill greater perfection. Thus, as he proceeds from virtue to virtue, ſo likewiſe from joy to joy, from felicity to felicity, and here already is and enjoys in its commencement, what he there will perfectly be and enjoy.

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And now, my dear friends, can ye doubt if ye would, that a truly virtuous, chriſtian life is an eminently happy life, that it ſhields mankind already here on earth from the generality and the greateſt of evils, exempts them from the generality and moſt diſtreſſing of troubles and cares, and procures them ſatisfactions and delights not leſs diverſified than pure. Is it not therefore true, undeniably true, that, agreeably to the declaration of the wiſe man in our text, the righteous man is a gainer by what he ſows, and that righteouſneſs leads him directly to life, to happineſs? Or can ye point out to me a better, a ſurer way to be and continually more to become happy, than the paths of chriſtian rectitude and virtue? Oh let us then ſtrike into thoſe paths, purſue our courſe and always walk along them with unwearied ſteps and increaſing joyfulneſs! We are all of us ſtriving and panting after happineſs, and on theſe ways alone ſhall we be ſure to find it, and that an abundant meaſure. Yes, my dear friends, truſt the declarations of God himſelf by reaſon and ſcripture, truſt the experience and the teſtimony of all the wiſe and good: the ways of wiſdom, and particularly of chriſtian wiſdom, are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace. Felicity, native, pure, diverſified felicity marks every portion of this road, felicity ſprings up beneath your footſteps as you proceed, and ſtill greater, ſtill purer, eternally abiding and eternally augmenting felicity is the end of it. Whoſoever of you underſtands and beholds

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and wiſhes to attain this glorious prize, oh let him ſtrive and run with unremitted ardour towards it, let him never be weary in the race till he has laid his hand upon it!

SERMON XLVI.

Adjuſtment of our Notions concerning what is called High and Low, Great and Little.

GOD, thou alone art great, and thy greatneſs is beyond all expreſſion! Alone eternal, alone independent, alone perfect, the fountain of being, of life, of energy, of beauty, of all that is and is called great and exalted both in heaven and on earth! Thee heaven and earth adore, angels and men, thee alſo we in the profoundeſt humility adore as the Supreme over all, as the Infinite, the Only, the Matchleſs. Yes, we feel that we are nothing before thee, have nothing and can do nothing, and all that ſurrounds us, is only a faint, obſcure adumbration of thy grandeur and glory. Might the ſentiment of this truth never be effaced or weakened in our minds! Might it continually teach us that modeſty and humility, which our nature and our relations towards thee demand! Might it ſecure us againſt the illuſions of that tinſel and falſe luſtre, whereby ſenſible, terreſtrial, evaneſcent objects ſo frequently dazzle our ſight and ſeduce us into error and folly! God, we are here aſſembled before thee,

thee, to reflect on theſe matters and to learn to diſtinguiſh between ſemblance and reality. Illuminate us by thy light, let the genial influences of thy ſpirit elevate and invigorate our minds, and ſhew us that which among men is called great or little, high or low, in its real aſpect. Grant that we may properly diſcern and juſtly judge of it, and never be otherwiſe affected and never otherwiſe behave towards it than is adequate to its real quality. Teach us to think of it as wiſe men and chriſtians, and thus lead us to the path of true perfection and happineſs. For theſe graces we preſent our petitions at the foot-ſtool of thy mercy-ſeat in the name of Jeſus Chriſt our lord, and relying on his promiſes, further addreſs thee as he taught us. Our father, &c.

LUKE, xvi. 15.

Ye are they which juſtify yourſelves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly eſteemed among men is abomination in the ſight of God.

TO underſtand the true worth of things, and to judge of them accordingly, is the foundation of all wiſdom, of all virtue, of all happineſs. Without this knowledge we are a prey to error, the ſport of our paſſions, and can never be ſafe from the moſt pernicious miſtakes and tranſgreſſions. And in fact, my pious hearers, why is a man ſo often obliged to reverſe his judgments and ſo often to alter his conduct; why ſo frequently to be aſhamed of both the

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one and the other to himſelf and to his fellow-creatures; why does he ſo ſeldom find the pleaſure, the advantage, the tranquillity, the contentment, that he ſeeks; why is he ſo frequently deceived in his expectations; why are his moſt flattering hopes ſo ſeldom entirely fulfilled; why does he ſo frequently deteſt and avoid to-day, what he yeſterday ſo highly eſteemed, and after which he ſo ardently ſtrove; why is he now ſo anxious to obtain, what he heretofore diſregarded; why elſe than becauſe he was ignorant of the value of theſe things, did not judge and treat them according to their true worth, but took them for ſomething other than what they really are? Yes, this is wiſdom, my pious hearers, true, uſeful wiſdom, wiſdom that is indiſpenſably neceſſary to the proper conduct of life and to the blithe enjoyment of its goods, to take every object for what it is, the great for great, the little for little, the exalted for exalted, the low for low, not to magnify the one nor diminiſh the other, not exceſſively to elevate the one, and not too deeply to depreſs the other. He who acts thus in every caſe and in all reſpects, will never be deceived and dazzled by ſemblance and figure; will never run after an empty deluſive ſhade, or a beautiful unattainable ideal form; will never waſte his powers in vain exertions, and never have cauſe to complain of deceit and impoſture, never of abortive expectations and diſappointed hopes. His judgments will be as ſure and conſiſtent as his conduct, and ſatisfaction and ſerenity will be his inſepar-

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able companions on the path of life. Are we unable to attain to this height of wiſdom and happineſs in our preſent ſtate, my pious hearers; are we all in this reſpect more or leſs ſubject to error, ſince ſenſuality has more or leſs authority over us: yet we can and ſhould be continually approaching nearer to that perfection. We can and ſhould learn wiſdom, and become progreſſively more capable of the happineſs that ariſes from it. This is our principal appointment on earth; and well for us if we hold it to be as grand and important as in reality it is! May I contribute ſomewhat to this end by my preſent diſcourſe! My deſign is to occaſion you to reflect upon ſome notions that are intimately connected with numberleſs others, and have a mighty influence on moſt of our judgments and actions, as well as on our peace of mind and happineſs. Theſe are the notions concerning what is and is called high and low, great and little. What is highly eſteemed among men, ſays Jeſus, is abomination in the ſight of God. Thereby plainly teaching us, that the ideas and judgments of mankind concerning theſe things are frequently erroneous, often totally falſe, that they frequently take what is low for exalted, and what is little for great, and the reverſe.

Only one greatneſs, my pious hearers, is abſolute greatneſs; only one height is poſitive, is unlimited and incomparable height: and that is the greatneſs and the ſublimity of God, who compriſes all reality, all actuality in himſelf, from whom proceeds, by whom

whom ſubſiſts whatever is and is called great and exalted; who is the origin of all things, the energy of all energies, the creator of all beings, the maker of all bodies, the father of all ſpirits. Yes, in his preſence ſhrink into thy inſignificance, o man, proſtrate thyſelf before him in the duſt, and in the profoundeſt humility adore him as that which alone is great, alone exalted.

All except God, is only comparatively great or little, high or low. All appears to us one while as great, at another as little, now as high, then as low, and deſerves likewiſe to be denominated and regarded by us now thus, then otherwiſe, according as it preſents itſelf to us on one ſide, or on the other, in connection with one ſet of objects, or with another. The ſun is great, immenſely great in compariſon with the grain of ſand, but juſt as little when compared with the univerſe. Man is exalted in compariſon with the reptile crawling in the duſt, but as low if compared with ſome ſuperior ſpirit, perhaps comprehending worlds entire. High and low, great and little are relative terms, that is, denoting ideas which do not abſolutely ſuit the objects or perſons which they concern, but in reference to other objects or perſons and their compariſon with them, which preſuppoſe a determinate meaſure, by which they are meted and judged of.

For juſtly appreciating, or eſtimating, what is called high or low, great or little, we muſt attend entirely to two particulars. Firſt to the ſtandard to

which theſe things are applied, and then to the method in which they are compared with it. Is the ſtandard true; and is the compariſon with it carefully and impartially made: then likewiſe the idea which we form of it is true, and the judgment we paſs upon it juſt.

And what is now the ſtandard of that which among mankind is and is called high or low, great or little? Here one ſtandard is kept and uſed by the ſenſual man, the man governed by his paſſions: another by the wiſe man and the chriſtian. In the eyes of the ſenſual man all is high and great, that acts upon his ſenſes more forcibly than uſual, that excites obſervation and noiſe, that is connected with power and authority, or implies power and authority; all that ſhines and glitters, dazzles and confounds, all that gives a man any conſpicuous precedence and ſets him above others; all that his ſagacity cannot comprehend, or his faculties cannot reach; all that excites his aſtoniſhment, or ſpreads fear and conſternation around him. Therefore he prizes ſo highly gold and ſilver, riches and affluence, magnificence in dreſs and equipage, extenſive poſſeſſions, a numerous, brilliant train of attendants; therefore he admires the ſplendour of the throne, the pomp of the court, the puiſſance of the prince, the exploits of the warrior, the trophies and ruins of the wide-waſting deſpot; therefore he is ſo apt to be deceived by any unuſual phænomenon, by every pretended ſacred obſcurity, or impoſed upon by impoſtors

tors who boaſt of poſſeſſing myſterious arts and occult ſciences. In the eyes of the man ſwayed by his paſſions all is high and great that ſoothes his preſent darling propenſity, that promiſes to gratify his luſts and appetites, that can procure or grant him the ſatisfaction after which he happens now to be ſtriving with all his might, or the emolument he is now canvaſſing for in preference to every other. Therefore he holds one and the ſame object or perſon to be now important, then unimportant, now great, then little, now exalted, then vulgar, juſt as it is favourable or unfavourable to the paſſion that is uppermoſt, as it is likely to flatter or not his inclination or his averſion, his hatred or his love, his fears or his hopes. On the other hand, to the ſenſual man or him who is the ſport of paſſion all is little and low that does not ſtrike the ſenſes, that is and is done in concealment, that operates in ſilence, that gives the individual no precedence over his equals, that leaves him in obſcurity; all that neither attracts obſervation, nor procures honour and renown, all that the rich man has in common with the poor, the ſtrong with the weak, the maſter with his ſervant; all in ſhort that implies conſtraint, limitation, exertion, labour, or demands of us ſuffering and ſacrifices. Therefore wiſdom and virtue, religion and piety, fortitude of mind and calm repoſe of ſoul; therefore ſelf-command and moderation, forbearance and placability, a retired, modeſt, noiſeleſs, but induſtrious and uſeful tenour of conduct

are of little conſequence in the eyes of the ſenſual man, of the man actuated by irregular paſſions.

Quite differently, my pious hearers, does the wiſe man, the chriſtian, judge of that which is great and little, what is high and low. He knows that the ſenſes and the paſſions are an unſafe and fallacious ſtandard of theſe and every other quality of things, that it is their property to magnify or to diminiſh, to heighten or to depreſs whatever falls under their cognizance, and are dazzled by every ſpecious appearance, deceived by every borrowed form. He knows that they generally judge and decide according to the bias they have previouſly taken, and are extremely partial. Accordingly he calls in the aid of reaſon and religion; they are his ſtandard, and they, even if they do not abſolutely ſecure him from every miſtake, never let him fall into dangerous errors, illumined by the light of reaſon and religion, and guided by their mandates and directions, he diſcriminates between real and apparent greatneſs, imaginary and actual eminence. He diſtinguiſhes between inward and outward, between phyſical and moral, between tranſitory and permanent grandeur and excellence. He never confounds the former with the latter, nor the latter with the former. He always decidedly prefers the inward to the outward, the moral to the phyſical, the conſtant to the mutable and accidental. In his eyes ſtrength of intellect is of more conſequence than ſtrength of body, beauty of mind than beauty of perſon, wiſdom and underſtanding than

wealth and honour, command over oneſelf than command over countries and nations. The former is intrinſic; the latter only extrinſic greatneſs. To be content in whatſoever ſtate, to be patient and firm under the preſſure of any affliction, to be faithful to duty and virtue under every temptation and enticement to ſin, to be temperate and diſcreet in the midſt of opulence, and always to make a conſcientious, worthy uſe of our faculties and diſtinctions and endowments, however great or diminutive they may be, is in his eyes infinitely greater and nobler, than to raiſe oneſelf by riches and power ever ſo high above others, than to ſhove ever ſo many weaker perſons out of one's way, and make them feel our ſuperiority, than ever ſo irreſiſtibly to carry through all our plans and undertakings, or to rule ever ſuch numbers of people with an iron ſceptre. The former is moral, the latter only phyſical greatneſs and eminence. To ſubject our ſentiments and affections to the laws of truth and order; always to do what is right and fit and in every caſe the beſt; always to act upon ſound principles and to purſue worthy ends; to be conſiſtent in the whole of our conduct, our behaviour in public and private life; and without lofty pretenſions, without noiſe and oſtentation to do as much good as we poſſibly can in our ſtation, in our ſphere: this in the eyes of the wiſe man, of the chriſtian, is far greater and more excellent, than to conquer cities, to ſubjugate nations, to bring about revolutions, and to ſpread the fame of our achieve-

ments from one extremity of the earth to the other, and at the ſame time to be the ſlave of our luſts and paſſions, or the ſcourge and tormentor of mankind. The former is laſting, everlaſting; the latter is tranſitory, evaneſcent greatneſs and eminence. No, according to the judgment of the wiſe man and the chriſtian, nothing is great, nothing excellent except what is right and proper, what is innocent and beneficial, what coincides with the will of God, what has his ſanction and is approved by him; nothing except what advances man towards his ſuperior deſtination, what brings him nearer to the deity, and gives him a cloſer reſemblance to that original of all perfection; nothing except what retains its worth in heaven as on earth, in the future as in the preſent world, before the judgment-ſeat of God as at the bar of ſtrict and unbiaſſed reaſon.

On the other ſide to him nothing is little, nothing low, nothing deſpicable, that is grounded in the nature of exiſtence and of man, what is fitted to the order of things eſtabliſhed and pronounced to be good by the Eternal Father, what is ſubſervient to his will, means to the promotion of his purpoſes, what is in any reſpect uſeful and ſalutary to his creatures, to his children; therefore no ſtation, no calling, no mode of life, no occupation, which in itſelf is lawful and convenient, and beneficial in its effects; no diſcipline, no affliction, no evil, no deſtitution, that tends to the good of the whole and to the completion of its particular members. No, only

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ſelf-imputable infirmity of mind and perverſeneſs of heart; only folly and ſin; only crimes and vice; only abuſe or non-employment of our faculties and endowments; only a dull, inert, unprofitable, or corrupt and generally noxious courſe of life, only diſobedience to God and rebellion againſt the laws of truth and order: only this degrades and diſgraces a man in the eyes of the wiſe man and the chriſtian; only this occaſions him to think and act contractedly and meanly; only this deprives him of all real excellence and dignity.

And what now is the upſhot of all this, what is the proper conſequence of theſe notions about what is high and low, great and little? How ſhould we apply them to the confirmation of our judgment and to the inſtitution of our conduct?

Would we maintain the titles of wiſe men and chriſtians, we muſt think and judge concerning all theſe things quite differently from the way in which they are thought and judged of by the great maſs of mankind. Maxims ſuch as the following muſt be to us eſtabliſhed and inviolable principles. Station and rank, were it even princely ſtation and regal rank, is in itſelf not real, permanent eminence: but the generally beneficial, generous uſe that we make of it, is what elevates the mind of the individual ſuperior to many others, what enlarges his heart and his orbit of action, and confers on him real, abiding excellence. — Humble origin, low ſtation, is in itſelf not mean, never diſhonours the individual, never

actually degrades him either in the ſight of God, or in the eyes of intelligent ſpirits, or of wiſe men: but a low way of thinking, low ſentiments, mean behaviour, are really what they are called, and are ſo in all ſtations, and among all claſſes of mankind, the foremoſt as well as the hindmoſt. — Power and authority are not real, permanent grandeur: only the wiſe, beneficial uſe of them is anything real of the kind. Little, contemptibly little is the mightieſt tyrant, the moſt arbitrary deſpot, who employs his force to deſtroy, his authority to oppreſs. Great, reſpectably great is the poor peaſant, the day-labourer, who in his narrow circle, and with his limited abilities, does and promotes as much good and utility, as he poſſibly can. — Wealth and opulence, magnificence and luxury, in themſelves render no man either great or eminent; and poverty and indigence, retiredneſs and obſcurity, in themſelves degrade and diſgrace nobody. The narroweſt mind and the moſt contracted, moſt unfeeling heart may be connected with the largeſt eſtate, as well as an aſpiring, liberal mind, and a capacious, tender heart with penury and want. Seldom is that which ſhines and glitters, which is announced with oſtentation and clamour, really grand and excellent. True grandeur and excellence are much oftener ſeen in privacy and retirement, than on the great theatre of the world, much oftener in the humble retreat of the ſage, or in the plain and ſimple dwelling of the man of middling ſtation, than in the ſplendour of

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the court, or on the throne of the prince. — Thus, my pious hearers, thus are we taught by wiſdom to think and to judge of that which among men is called high and low, great and little. Thus differs her opinion and her deciſion thereupon from the opinion and the deciſion of the bulk of mankind. Let us hearken to her voice, and form our judgment upon her's.

All thy grandeur, wiſdom calls to man, all thy grandeur, whether phyſical or moral grandeur, is but comparatively ſo. Contraſt thyſelf with the plants, with the beaſts of the field, with the entirely ſenſual and depraved of mankind, and thou muſt feel thyſelf far ſuperior to them, muſt feel thyſelf endowed with great faculties and privileges. Contraſt thyſelf with beings of a higher order, contraſt thyſelf with Jeſus, the grand exemplar of all human perfection, and an inward, lively ſentiment of feebleneſs, of defects and failings will humiliate and confound thee. Contraſt thyſelf with the deity himſelf, and everything apparently great and excellent vaniſhes from thy view, and thou entirely loſeſt ſight of thyſelf with all that thou art and haſt.

Boaſt not thyſelf, continues wiſdom in her addreſs to man, boaſt not thyſelf of thy grandeur or thy eminence, when they are founded merely on accidents and externals; on the privileges of thy birth, of thy form, of thy ſtation, thy office, thy revenues, or on actions that rather attract the eyes of the crowd and excite their acclamations, than diffuſe real happineſs around.

around. All this is ſpurious, borrowed, tranſitory, falſe greatneſs and eminence, that will not ſtand the teſt of reaſon nor reſiſt the force of time, and are apt to fade and wither away as ſuddenly as they ſprung up.

Bluſh not on the other hand, o man, bluſh not at thy meanneſs, thy limitations, and the obſcurity which ſurrounds thee if they are merely the conſequences of thy parentage, of thy birth, of thy ſituation, of thy want of fortune, if they be not the fruits of thy folly or thy criminal conduct. A ſound underſtanding, a mind perpetually ſtriving after higher perfection, a generous heart, affectionate towards God and man, confer on thee greater intrinſic, permanent worth, lead thee farther on the ſcale of beings, and aſſign thee a ſuperior rank among them, than all other outward diſtinctions, than crowns and ſceptres, placed on the heads and in the hands of fools and profligates. Here may be very often applied the aſſertion of Jeſus in our text: that which is highly eſteemed among men, is abomination in the ſight of God.

No, to be well-pleaſing to God, thy creator and lord, to do his will and to have communion with him, to be wiſe and good, and truly uſeful to thy brethren: herein and herein alone ſeek thy real grandeur and eminence, o man. All outward, ſenſual, earthly grandeur and eminence are ſooner or later overwhelmed in the night of the grave and oblivion. Where are the great heroes, the great monarchs, the

the great empires of antiquity? Where is their grandeur and eminence? Thoſe lie buried in the duſt, theſe are gone to ruin, and hiſtory has ſcarcely preſerved their names. No, only greatneſs of mind, only grandeur of ſoul abide for ever, and accompany the man who poſſeſſes them, out of one world into the other, from one ſtage of his exiſtence to another. After this grandeur, after more eminent wiſdom, after more excellent virtue and piety, let us ſtrive, my dear friends, if we would not purſue an empty ſhadow and hereafter be aſhamed of our childiſh efforts, but reſolve really to become as perfect and as happy as according to our nature and deſtination we may become.

SERMON XLVII.

The religious Behaviour of Mankind in Proſperity and in Adverſity.

GOD, to thee belong majeſty and power, glory, praiſe and thankſgiving! All that is in heaven and on earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, thou reigneſt over all, thine are riches and honour, on thee alone it depends that any one can be great and mighty. Proſperity and adverſity, life and death are in thy hand, and are diſpenſed by thee according to the laws of conſummate wiſdom and benignity among all thy creatures. We too, thy children upon earth, can experience neither evil nor good that does not depend on thee, that is not adapted and directed by thee to the fitteſt purpoſes. Thou ſurveyeſt, thou comprehendeſt, and ordereſt all our fortunes, and governeſt them in ſuch manner as is moſt conducive to our benefit, and to the perfection of the whole. All that comes from thee is bleſſing and bounty; all has perfection and happineſs in view. Oh that we perceived this truth, with conviction perceived it, in proſperity as in adverſity, in the afflictions no leſs than in the ſatisfactions of life, and in every ſituation behaved conſiſtently with this knowledge! How humble, how grateful, how beneficent, how moderate, how heavenly-minded ſhould we be in proſperity,

rity, and how patient, how intrepid, how confident, and hopeful in adverſity! How tolerable and eaſy ſhould we thus render to ourſelves the afflictions, and how much ſweeter and ſatisfactory the joys of life! May then wiſdom and virtue, religion and piety be our conſtant, inſeparable companions and guides, along whatever path, whether dark or ſhining, whether rugged or ſmooth, thou calleſt us to go, and by which thou wouldſt lead us to the glorious prize! May therefore the conſiderations which we are now entering upon, fix our attention to their precepts and directions, and rouſe us to a willing and faithful obedience to them! Grant that they may, by thy grace, be ſo grafted inwardly in our minds, and in our hearts, that they may be ever preſent to us, when we are in want of their counſel and encouragement. We implore of thee theſe mercies, as the votaries of Jeſus, the great captain of our ſalvation, who, through his whole life, marked out the path which leads to the heavens, and in his name conclude our ſupplications, ſaying, as he taught us: Our father, &c.

JAMES V. 13.

Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him ſing pſalms.

PROSPERITY and adverſity, in this life, generally by turns precede and follow each other. That ſucceeds to this, and this to that, in regular viciſſitude. Seldom, extremely ſeldom, does either the former or the latter uniformly accompany a man through

through the whole of his terreſtrial carreer, from the beginning to the end of it. Seldom, extremely ſeldom, can we point out a perſon, who has not alternately experienced them both, who has not at one time been attended by proſperity, and at another by adverſity. The magnitude and the duration of each may be various; but their empire over man, and their influence on the events of his life, are univerſal. And this mixture of good and evil, this interchange of proſperity and adverſity, is perfectly well ſuited to the ſtate of education and diſcipline in which we now live. Without it, the preſent life would not be to us a ſchool of wiſdom and virtue, a preparation to a ſuperior ſtate; and, at the concluſion of it we ſhould find ourſelves juſt ſtanding where we were at our entrance upon it. At our death we ſhould be nearly the ſame ſenſual, animal creatures, the ſame irrational, unwiſe beings we were at our birth. But ſhould this mixture of good and ill, this viciſſitude of agreeable and diſagreeable accidents and events procure us all the benefit which they may and ought to procure us; ſhould we by them become wiſe and virtuous in a higher degree, and be capable of a higher degree of happineſs: it is by no means a matter of indifference how we behave under them. Providence places us all in this ſchool of wiſdom and virtue: but we do not all make equal proficiency in it: we do not all ply our ſtudies with equal care and aſſiduity; we therefore do not all acquire the ſame ſkill and ſagacity. We are not all attentive, diligent,

diligent, plodding ſcholars, having conſtantly in view the ſole end for which they are placed in it, and ſtriving continually more fully to attain it. Therefore proſperity and adverſity do not always produce in mankind theſe effects which they are deſigned to produce; therefore they ſo frequently abuſe them both, to the detriment of themſelves and others; therefore we ſo frequently remain, with all the means of education and exerciſe we have, on ſo low a form of underſtanding and moral perfection. Let us, my chriſtian friends, in order that we may avoid this ſad deviation, liſten attentively to the inſtructions given us in this particular by wiſdom and religion. Let us, in purſuance of their direction, conſider the virtuous and pious behaviour of mankind, both in proſperity and in adverſity.

Is any among you afflicted? ſays the apoſtle in our text, let him pray. Is any merry? let him ſing pſalms. Whether a man, would he ſay, be proſperous or unfortunate, ſorrowful or joyful, whether things go well or ill with him; let him take religion for his companion, his counſellor and his comforter. Let her leſſons, her precepts, her promiſes enhance his proſperity, and alleviate his misfortunes; let them render both the one and the other harmleſs and beneficial to him; let them teach him modeſty and moderation in the former; and in the latter inſpire him with confidence and courage. — Come then, my pious hearers, let us hearken to the voice of this teacher and guide, commiſſioned to us by God, and endea-

endeavour to profit by her ſuggeſtions and cautions. What ſays ſhe to us in proſperity? What does ſhe teach us in adverſity? In proſperity ſhe preaches to us humility, moderation, love, heavenly-mindedneſs: in adverſity patience, fortitude, reſignation, and truſt in God, cheerful views into the future world, and careful preparation for it.

Fares it well with thee, o man, ſhe thus addreſſes us, art thou in poſſeſſion of a variety of outward endowments and diſtinctions, doſt thou enjoy bleſſings of various kinds, have thy affairs and undertakings ſucceeded to thy wiſh: be not proud of theſe benefits, of theſe diſtinctions, of theſe bleſſings, of this ſucceſs. Boaſt not of them, as though they were thy procuration, as if thou hadſt none but thyſelf to thank for thy wiſdom and thy accompliſhments. Bethink thee how ſeldom the race is to the ſwift, how ſeldom the battle is to the ſtrong, how ſeldom dexterity and ſkill ſuffice to the acquiſition of wealth, how all depend on time and chance, on a thouſand favourable circumſtances, and on the will of him who regulates all theſe circumſtances according to his good pleaſure, and cauſes them all to concur to thy benefit. Never forget the abſolute dependency of thyſelf and all things upon the ſovereign ruler and governor of the world. Forget not, that health and ſickneſs, riches and poverty, elevation and depreſſion, proſperity and adverſity, life and death are in his hand; that he diſtributes light and darkneſs, good and evil in the world, and among mankind, as

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is moſt conſiſtent with the furtherance of his exalted, and generally occult deſigns. Rely not therefore on thine outward goods and diſtinctions, reckon not upon them as upon thy real, laſting property. Hold not the moſt unſtable and fluctuating of all things, proſperity, for ſecure and unalterable. Thou canſt not tell, whether after a few days or years, whether to-morrow thou mayſt ſtill be and have and be able to do, what to day thou art and haſt and art able to do. How ſoon may thy bright and ſhining path be overſpread with clouds, how ſoon may the deceitful luſtre of thy golden hours be tarniſhed! How ſoon may thy riches leave thee, thy friends deſert thee, the reſpect in which thou art held be obſcured, thy faculties and thy ſpirits decline, and thy body ſtand tottering on the brink of the grave! And where are then the frail ſupports on which thou leanedſt, the flattering proſpects of an uninterrupted, perennial welfare in which thou thoughtſt thyſelf ſo ſecure? No, confeſs and feel in the midſt of plenty, in the full enjoyment of proſperity, thy weakneſs, thy caducity, thy dependency, and the inſtability, the dreamlike nature, the inſufficiency of all terreſtrial goods and diſtinctions, and let this teach thee modeſty and humility.

Liveſt thou in affluence, thus wiſdom and religion addreſs thee farther, art thou and are thine enterpriſes crowned with proſperity and ſucceſs: be moderate in the uſe of this plenty and of this proſperity. Let nothing of all that belongs to them get the

aſcendant over thee, and bring thee into bondage; let nothing of it become ſo neceſſary and indiſpenſable to thee, as that the want or the privation of it, which may happen to thee ſo ſoon, to-day or to-morrow, ſhould render thee unhappy. Let not thy ſtation and thy rank, nor thy goods and diſtinctions, nor thy friends and favourites, ever be ſo cloſely, ſo inſeparably aſſociated with the idea and the enjoyment of thy ſatisfaction, that with the former thou muſt alſo loſe the latter. Uſe all that providence gives thee to poſſeſs and to enjoy beyond others of the the beautiful and good, the convenient and agreeable, with a cheerful mind, but abuſe it not. Beware of giving free courſe to thy luſts and appetites, and of gratifying them, even when they incline towards innocent objects, ſo frequently and ſo fully, as thy circumſtances and fortune will allow. Beware of enjoying the ſuavities, the pleaſures and amuſements of this life, its goods and ſatisfactions, in ſuch full meaſure as is poſſible to thee, for fear leſt thy enjoyment ſhould preſently turn into ſurfeit and diſguſt. Employ neither thy bodily, nor thy mental faculties ſo as if they could never be exhauſted, and uſe neither thy power, nor thy authority, nor thy friends, as though thou couldſt not loſe them. Let neither ambition and the luſt of domineering, nor ſenſuality and the propenſity to voluptuouſneſs, ſeduce thee to tranſgreſs the bounds which the laws of truth, of order, of juſtice, of equity, of humanity, have preſcribed even to the mightieſt and moſt

proſperous, and which none can tranſgreſs with impunity. Exerciſe thyſelf continually in abſtinence and ſelf-command, in the voluntary abnegation and dereliction of the pleaſures of ſenſe, in the intentional diſuſe of outward advantages, if thou wouldſt maintain thy freedom, if thou wouldſt vindicate the dignity of man. Never ſacrifice ſpiritual, laſting perfection, never wiſdom and virtue, to thy proſperity; but be ever ready to purchaſe thoſe by the diminution and the loſs of this.

Art thou proſperous; liveſt thou in the enjoyment of affluence, continue wiſdom and religion thirdly, make a truly chriſtian and beneficial uſe of it. Let love, the love of God and man, actuate thy conduct and direct thee in the employment of it. Art thou merry? as our text recommends, ſing pſalms. Raiſe thyſelf in ſpirit from the ſtream that ſupplies thee with joy, to the ſource from which it flows, to the firſt, eternal, independent cauſe of thy exiſtence and thy welfare, to God, to the ſupreme diſpenſer of joy, from whom every good gift and every perfect boon proceeds, and who is inceſſantly ſhedding life and energy, and ſatisfaction and felicity, upon the whole of his immenſe creation. Sweeten and ennoble to thee whatever of agreeable, of beautiful and good, thou haſt and enjoyeſt, by conſidering and enjoying it as the gift of thy father in heaven, as a proof of his overruling wiſdom and providence, as an earneſt of yet greater benefits and bleſſings. Learn to ſolace thyſelf in God, in all his works and benefactions, in

the little as well as in the great, reſign thyſelf to his guidance and conduct the more calmly and confidently, and hearken to all his commands with the more willing and cheerful obedience. From what God has done and ſtill does for thee in this terreſtrial life, on this inferior ſtage of thy exiſtence, draw concluſions touching what thou mayſt expect, in a better life, on higher ſtages of thine exiſtence from him who is pure benignity and love. Let not the enjoyment of proſperity ever entice thee from him, the author and upholder of it, but ſtrive by its means to be ever approaching nearer to him, the Father of lights, by employing all that thou haſt received from him in conformity to his will, and to the furtherance of his deſigns. Therefore, let the moſt univerſal, the ſincereſt, the moſt active love towards thy brethren, the children of thy father in heaven, actuate thee in the uſe of it. Take heed that thou ſlight not, that thou treat not with ſcorn, ſuch as are leſs ſucceſsful, leſs powerful, leſs great, leſs wealthy than thyſelf. Rather conceal thy advantages, and refrain even from their innocent uſe, than boaſt of them inſultingly to them, or diſplay them in a manner that may hurt or affront them. Be ſo much the more condeſcending, the more kind and friendly towards thy inferiors, by how much the more fortune has raiſed thee above them. Be ſo much the more ready and zealous to help and to ſerve others, diffeminate ſo much the more refreſhment and comfort around thee, by how much the more means thereto thou haſt

haſt in thy power. Take up the cauſe of the innocent, the oppreſſed, the perſecuted ſo much the more warmly, by how much the greater thy conſequence and thy influence may be. Give to the neceſſitous of every deſcription ſo much the more abundantly and cheerfully, by how much the more thou art able to give. Make the principal, the higheſt value of thy proſperity, of thy honour, of thy authority, of thy riches, and the like, to conſiſt in this, that thou canſt do and promote ſo much the more good, and thereby be ever gaining a nearer reſemblance to God, thy heavenly father, who from everlaſting to everlaſting is effecting pure good and perpetually the beſt.

Wouldſt thou laſtly, o man, (thus wiſdom and religion addreſs thee farther) wouldſt thou poſſeſs and enjoy thy proſperity as a wiſe man and a chriſtian: poſſeſs and enjoy it with a heavenly mind. Poſſeſs and enjoy it as a creature whoſe deſires and endeavours, whoſe proſpects and hopes are not confined to the few years and days of this terreſtrial life; as a creature that is deſtined to immortality, to ever increaſing perfection and happineſs. Let not the advantages, the goods and ſatisfactions of this life, however ſplendid and covetable they may be, ever eclipſe from thy view the far greater and better goods and joys and advantages of the ſuperior life. Never let the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of thoſe make thee indifferent towards the acquiſition and the enjoyment of theſe. Never ſhould the preſent and the viſible take entire poſſeſſion of thy ſoul and employ all thy

capacities and powers. Never ſhouldſt thou on their account, forget thy future glorious appointment, never, for them, forget what thou art deſigned hereafter to be and to become in a better world. Often compare the inſtability and the tranſitorineſs of all the pomp and ſplendour that ſurrounds thee here, the ſhort, the momentary life of all the joys that flutter round thee here, with the eſſential wants, with the inſatiable deſires of thy immortal ſpirit; compare them with the ſubſtantial, permanent goods and advantages which futurity allows thee to hope for. Look more to theſe than to thoſe; ſtrive more after theſe than after thoſe. They laſt only for a ſhort period; theſe are of endleſs duration. They are the airy forms and figures of a dream, which are diſperſed at the break of day: theſe remain to thee after thou art awake from that dream, and compoſe the joy and the happineſs of that bliſsful day to which no night ſucceeds.

Thus, my dear friends, do wiſdom and religion addreſs us in proſperity. Oh well for us, if we attend to their voice and follow their directions! So ſhall we be not only proſperous, but happy alſo; and by a worthy uſe of proſperity render ourſelves ever more and more capable of a purer and higher felicity. And what leſſons, what comfort, what ſtrength, do theſe celeſtial monitors give us in adverſity?

Bear thy misfortunes, ſay they to man, bear thy misfortunes with patience and reſignation. This is the beſt, the only means of alleviating thy burden

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and rendering it ſupportable to thee. Let not thy afflictions, thy pains, thy troubles weigh thee down, not render thee diſpirited, not plunge thee in the abyſs of deſpair. Think not that all is loſt, on loſing temporal goods and outward advantages. Deem not thyſelf wretched and unhappy, becauſe thou art unfortunate. Never let go the hope of again perceiving light after darkneſs, and of changing thy rough and dreary path for one more bright and even. Think not that adverſity is more conſtant and unchangeable than proſperity. They are both equally unſtable and fleeting, both ſubject to a variety of changes. Art thou afflicted? pray, as our text recommends. Bear thy affliction in the ſentiment of thy dependance on God, if thou wilt bear it with patience. Forget not that it is he who bringeth low and lifteth up, who wounds and heals, who maketh poor and maketh rich, who layeth in the grave and bringeth out of it again. Conſider all adverſe events that befall thee as decrees and diſpenſations of thy father in heaven, and never forget that he loves his children even when he cauſes them to ſuffer and corrects them by ſufferings, and that he can neither intend nor effect any thing but their benefit. Never therefore murmur againſt him, the Holy One and the Juſt, the All-bountiful, never think thyſelf caſt off, forgotten and neglected by him who knows all, who ſupports and animates all, who rules and governs all by the laws of ſovereign wiſ-

dom, who purpoſes the good of all his creatures, and has compaſſion on the works of his hands. Rather revere his wiſe benignity even then with filial ſubmiſſion when thou canſt not ſearch out and comprehend his ways, becauſe their ultimate iſſue is veiled in obſcurity.

Bear thy misfortunes with firmneſs; thus farther do wiſdom and religion addreſs the unfortunate. Beware of employing baſe, nefarious means, means that are at variance with the will of God and with thy duty, for liberating thyſelf from thy ſufferings. Caſt not the load that oppreſſes thee, inſolently and peeviſhly from thee. Bear it firmly, untill it ſhall pleaſe him who laid it on thee, to free thee from it. He has balanced the burden and the ſtrength it requires with the niceſt preciſion, and will never lay more upon thee than thou art able to bear. Is thy ſtrength exhauſted; be ſure the moment of help and deliverance is nigh. Never then deſpair of thy ſtrength how limited ſoever it be; he who gave it thee is both able and willing to increaſe it. His power, which worketh all things in all, is mighty in the weak, and can do more, and very often does far more than we can either deſire or conceive. Hold out therefore undiſmayed, though thy ſufferings continue ever ſo long, and ſucceſſive misfortunes threaten thee with deſtruction and ruin. The man, the chriſtian, contending with adverſity, and reſolutely maintaining the conflict, is a ſight on which the ruler of the world

world looks down with ſingular complacency, and he may promiſe himſelf everything from the fruit of his ſtruggle and triumph.

Unite with thy fortitude, thus thirdly do wiſdom and religion addreſs the unfortunate, unite with thy fortitude an unſhaken confidence and inviolable truſt in God. All the attributes that can inſpire thee with truſt and affiance eſſentially, unlimitedly belong to the Supreme, the Infinite, thy creator and father. He is the Omniſcient, who knows exactly and with infallible certainty, all thy neceſſities, all thy imperfections and afflictions, and all the means and methods for relieving and removing them. He is the Almighty who has all things in his power; to whom all creatures, all accidents, all occurrences in heaven and on earth are ſubject; without whoſe permiſſion no misfortune can overtake thee; at whoſe command the darkneſs gives place to light, and even calamities are made ſubſervient to thy benefit. He is the All-bountiful, who wills and promotes nothing but perfection and happineſs, and wills and promotes them even when all things ſeem combined to our deſtruction. Do honour to him, the Omniſcient, the Almighty, the All-bountiful, by expecting of him nought but good and conſtantly the beſt. Never deſpair of his ſuccour, never doubt that he will grant it thee at the propereſt time, in the fitteſt circumſtances, in the way beſt adapted to thy real happineſs; and put thy truſt in him, the wiſe and gracious ruler of the world, thy bountiful and loving father, ſure that he will never forget

forget thee, never forſake or neglect thee; but will, ſooner or later, in this way or in that, infallibly lead thee to the pitch of perfection of which thou art capable.

Look therefore, thus laſtly do wiſdom and religion addreſs the unfortunate, look to the glorious prize that is ſet before thee; look to the future world that awaits thee, and to the abundant recompenſe and rewards that thou there mayſt hope for from the loving-kindneſſes of God. Whether the way that leads thee to this prize be ſomewhat obſcure or bright, ſomewhat toilſome or ſomewhat eaſy to purſue; whether theſe few days and years of thy firſt nurture and diſcipline have cauſed thee more ſorrows or more joys; that need not, this ſurely will not diſturb thee, ſo thou doſt but attain that glorious prize, ſo thou art formed in the ſchool of this life to wiſdom and virtue, and thereby rendered fit for the better, the life everlaſting. What are all the afflictions of this preſent time, compared to the glory which ſhall be thy portion if thou haſt borne thoſe afflictions as a chriſtian, and uſed them to thy improvement? Yes, my dear friends, to become conſtantly better, conſtantly more perfect, by ſorrows as well as by joys, by adverſity as well as by proſperity, at this let us all unweariedly ſtrive, ſo will none of us miſs of his aim, ſo ſhall we all be ever advancing towards it on every road, in every ſtation, and hereafter rejoice in all the good and all the evil, all the proſperity and all the adverſity by which we attained it.

SERMON XLVIII.

Why there is not more Happineſs among us.

GOD, thou haſt deſigned us all for happineſs, made us all ſuſceptible of it, inſpired us all with the moſt ardent aſpirations after it, and granted us the moſt various, moſt efficacious means for obtaining it: and yet we are not all happy, and many of us are far leſs ſo than they might be. Lord, thou art righteous, thou art eſſential benignity and love; to do good and to bleſs is thy ſole, thy eternal occupation; from thee continually proceeds pure bounty, and the greateſt poſſible meaſure of good, of which thy creatures at every time and in every combination of things are capable. No, not of thee, the All-gracious, but of ourſelves, of our thoughtleſſneſs, our levity, our negligence, our indolence, ſhould we complain, if we recede from the golden prize of happineſs, or but very imperfectly and defectively enjoy it. Ah but too often do we ſeek it where it is not to be found, and waſte our nobleſt faculties in vain and fruitleſs endeavours. But too often do we ſhut up our ſenſes and our hearts againſt the beautiful and the good which thou

thou offereſt to our enjoyment, paſs by with indifference the pureſt, richeſt ſources of pleaſure and delight, or draw ſo negligently from them, that we taſte not their ſweetneſs, nor experience their animating and vivifying power. But too ſeldom do we ſubmit to be guided by wiſdom and virtue and piety, and therefore how can we be ſafe from innumerable miſtakes, from dangerous deviations and tranſgreſſions? Ah God, teach us thyſelf to perceive our failings and errors, and bring us back from our wanderings. Grant that we may walk with more attention and care, with more ſure and firm ſteps on the path of happineſs, and let our way be cheered by the light of truth. Bleſs even now our reflections on this ſubject. Teach us more clearly to perceive, what we ſhould avoid and do in order to become happy, and let this knowledge be active and lively in our hearts. We beſeech thee to grant our requeſts, in the name of our lord and ſaviour Jeſus Chriſt, and as his votaries conclude our petitions, ſaying: Our father, &c.

LUKE xii. 15.

Take heed and beware of covetouſneſs; for a man's life conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth.

HAPPINESS, my pious hearers, as I lately obſerved, and as every one of us experimentally knows, without my information, happineſs is the object

ject after which every man is panting and ſtriving. Every one diſtinguiſhes between agreeable and diſagreeable ideas and feelings; ſeeks to excite and cheriſh the former, and to efface and to obviate as much as poſſible the latter; dwells with pleaſure on the former, never ſurrenders himſelf to the latter without reſiſtance and conflict; and is ever deſirous that the former ſhould greatly overbalance the latter. Every man is therefore capable of a certain degree, higher or lower, of happineſs; and theſe degrees are as various, as the faculties, the temper, the culture, the morals, the religion, the connections and ſituations of mankind. They differ in regard of knowledge and enjoyment of good, of taſte and choice, as widely as men differ from one another. We, my pious hearers, we, as men and as chriſtians, belong to the claſs of rational inhabitants of the earth who are capable of a higher, of an eminently great felicity. We have attained to a conſiderable ſtage of culture. Our intellectual faculties are ſet in greater action. Our underſtanding is cultivated; we are trained to reflection. We know and poſſeſs many ſources of ſatisfaction and pleaſure, and of the nobleſt ſatisfaction and of the pureſt pleaſure, which are hidden and unknown to very many perſons, perhaps to the greater part of mankind. The light of chriſtianity has diminiſhed the force of many hurtful prejudices and errors among us, called our attention to many important objects, and given us juſter notions and greater certainty of many others.

We more clearly underſtand what happineſs is, and on what way, by what means it is attainable. But are we in fact more happy than others? As happy as in our ſituation, by our abilities, with our aſſiſtances, we might be? Is the degree of our happineſs proportionate to the degree of our culture, of our knowledge, and the favourable circumſtances in which we live? Could the former be judged of from the latter? Does more ſatisfaction than diſſatisfaction, more joy than ſorrow prevail among us? Do more ſongs of thankſgiving and praiſe, aſcend to heaven from among us, than ſighs and complaints? Ah, my dear friends, every day's experience I fear would contradict us were we to aſſert this in general to be the caſe. But may not the fault of this deficiency of happineſs lie with ourſelves? Let us reflect on it, my pious hearers. Let us ſearch out the cauſes, why among men, ſuch as we, among men of our kind and in our ſituation, not more true happineſs is to be found. By tracing out theſe cauſes, and taking them for what they are, it will be the eaſier for us to ſurmount or to obviate the obſtacles to our happineſs. Oh may my preſent diſcourſe contribute ſomewhat to the promotion of this ſalutary deſign, to the advancement of your happineſs!

The firſt cauſe why not more happineſs is found among us, among people of our ſort and in our ſituation, is this: We do not cheriſh and employ the capacity for being happy with ſufficient care. And wherein conſiſts this capacity; this ſuſceptibility for ſatis-

ſatisfaction and pleaſure? By what means is it to be cheriſhed? It conſiſts in this, and is thus cheriſhed: that our ſenſes and our heart are open to whatever of beautiful and good is to be found in the world and among mankind and in our peculiar ſituation; that we are attentive to it; that we eagerly ſearch for it everywhere, willingly contemplate it, dwell longer and rather upon it, than upon its oppoſite. It conſiſts in this, and is cheriſhed thus; this capacity for being happy: that we do not harden ourſelves againſt the impreſſions which the beautiful and good make upon us, by a life of too much diſſipation, or by inattention and levity; that we excite and nouriſh the natural and moral feelings by the propereſt means, refine and dignify our taſte, exerciſe ourſelves in reflections on whatever we ſee and experience, and thereby form ever clearer and juſter conceptions of the nature and quality of objects, of their deſignations, their appointment, their relations and connections. This point once gained; the man muſt have a tranquil heart, free from all inordinate, violent paſſions: he muſt have his attention under command; he muſt readily and frequently employ himſelf in the contemplation of nature, in the conſideration of its numberleſs beauties and goods; muſt ſeek his pleaſure in the ſilent enjoyment of them; and ſolitary meditation and converſe with wiſe, ſentimental perſons muſt be his darling recreation. If therefore, my pious hearers, you hurry along the path of life, as it were with your eyes

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ſhut and with unfeeling hardened hearts, amidſt all the beauties and bleſſings that ſurround you; or, if ſhackled by ſome paſſion, you direct your whole attention ſolely to the gratifying of it, and to all elſe be indifferent and inſenſible; if, driven to and fro, either by a multiplicity of affairs or by an endleſs round of diverſions, ye never addict yourſelves to thought, never to ſilence and repoſe; if ye view all things only on the ſurface, judge of them only by their outward form, and learn to know nothing juſtly by continued reflection upon it: then the capacity and the diſpoſition for happineſs which is proper to you by nature, remains within you for the moſt part undeveloped and unuſed, and it is your own fault if you be leſs happy than, from your faculties and in your ſituation, you might be. Uſe, exerciſe theſe powers, profit by this ſituation, give your attention its due direction, yield your mind and your heart to every impreſſion of the beautiful and good, and learn to know and feel the worth of it by reflection. Happineſs, my pious hearers, will not obſequiouſly obtrude itſelf upon us, come without ſolicitation on our part; it muſt be ſought for and acquired by attention, by ſeriouſneſs, frequently by exertion, always by the diligent uſe of all conducive means.

Another cauſe, intimately connected with the foregoing, why not more happineſs is found among us, is this: we have, we poſſeſs, we experience, we enjoy a great deal of good without conſciouſneſs, without conſideration, and therefore alſo without reliſh and without

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out pleaſure. Sometimes it is long poſſeſſion and habit that deprives the good of its charms and its worth in our eyes; ſometimes it is the reſtleſs endeavour after ſome other precarious, and perhaps very deceitful, or however ſome very unneceſſary good, that makes us inſenſible towards every other; ſometimes it is inattention and levity, which allow us to obſerve nothing, to ſtop at nothing, to tarry at nothing, but cauſe all things to paſs by us like fleeting ſhadows and viſionary forms. But how unjuſtly do we act in this reſpect againſt divine providence, and how inimically towards ourſelves! What day, what hour of our lives is not marked by various inſtances of providential care and kindneſs? What benefits, what comforts, what accommodations, what advantages, for our body and our mind, do we not daily and hourly enjoy? Or, is the ſentiment of our life, the ſentiment of our faculties and our health; is the manifold, profitable uſe we make and may make of them; is the ſatisfying of our various urgent wants; is the idea of our ſuperior nature and deſtination, the idea of our immortality, the elevation of our mind to God, and the proſpect into a better world to come: are not all theſe ſuch goods as may daily exhilarate and bleſs us in the enjoyment of? And how much beautiful and good may we not daily ſee and experience in nature and in ſocial life? If we now carefully obſerved all this, if we enjoyed all this with conſciouſneſs and conſideration; if in the enjoyment of it we raiſed ourſelves to the firſt,

eternal ſource of the beautiful and good, and thence drew concluſions of our connection with it and of our future expectations: how much ſhould we thereby increaſe the ſum of our agreeable ideas and ſenſations, the ſum of our happineſs! What a great preponderancy would the good have over the bad, even by our own judgment and by our own ſenſation! With how many advantages and benefits, with what variety of delight would not every greater and ſmaller ſection of our lives be marked in our own eyes! Would ye then augment your happineſs, my dear friends; repreſent to yourſelves frequently at your upriſing, frequently at your downlying, frequently in the hours of ſilent meditation, all the beautiful and good that ſurrounds you, and that you yourſelves have and poſſeſs, or may do and enjoy; all the energies and endowments of your mind and your body, all the means of illumination, of improvement, of pleaſure, all the comforts of domeſtic and of ſocial life, all that ye now are, and that ye may hope to become hereafter. Then reckon up the whole amount of your true riches, and then uſe and enjoy them as reaſonable creatures, with clear conſciouſneſs and grateful ſentiment of their worth.

A third cauſe, my pious hearers, why not more happineſs is found among us: is, we require, we expect but too often impoſſible, incompatible things, and hold them for neceſſary, eſſential parts of our happineſs. Vain deſires and deceitful expectations always make us more or leſs miſerable, and not unfrequently

frequently deprive even the good that neither beguiles our deſires nor our expectations, of its whole value in our eyes. If therefore, my pious hearers, as men, ye have a human, that is, an earthly, frail, deſtructible body, and yet would experience no diſagreeable impreſſions from outward things, and yet would remain free from all infirmities, from all pains and ſickneſſes; if ye be connected with frail, mortal men, and love frail, mortal men, and yet would never loſe, and never be parted from them; if ye lead a ſocial life, and enjoy the various comforts and advantages of it, and yet for its ſake would bear nothing, ſuffer nothing, forego nothing, do nothing; if, as men, ye have limited powers, and yet require that they ſhould never be relaxed or exhauſted by labour and exertion; if, as citizens of the world, as links of the infinite chain of things, ye can occupy but a certain place among mankind, can be only in a particular and determinate ſituation, and yet complain of the limitations and difficulties neceſſarily connected with it, as of real evils, and yet covet at once the advantages and accommodations of other places and ſituations; if ye now live in a ſtate of education, exerciſe, and preparation, and yet ſhun whatever is laborious and requires exertion, and yet would reap before ye have ſown: then indeed your wiſhes cannot be ſatisfied, your expectations cannot be fulfilled, then muſt ye indeed miſs the object after which ye are ſtriving, becauſe it belongs not to the actual world, but is merely an

illuſion of your fancy. No, would ye be happy; require no other goods, no other ſatisfactions and pleaſures, than are ſuitable to you, in your place, in your connections, in your preſent ſtate; require neither the happineſs of inferior nor the happineſs of ſuperior creatures, neither the groſs, ſenſual pleaſure of the brutes, nor the purer, ſpiritual enjoyment of angels, neither unmingled and uninterrupted, nor pure extatic joys. To moderate and to controul our deſires, and to require and to expect nothing that is inconſiſtent withthe nature of things and with our ſtate of being, is the direct road to happineſs.

A fourth cauſe, why not more happineſs is found among us is this: we miſunderſtand many kinds of happineſs and many of the means of being ſo, and do not ſufficiently prize and ſeek others. Every one wiſhes to be happy, and every one looks out for ſome means of becoming ſo. Who holds not health, ſtrength of body, ſucceſs in his affairs, a good reputation, a ſufficient income, an unſolicitous, convenient life, fortunate connections with his fellow-creatures, who holds not riches, reſpect and honour, for deſirable goods? Who ſtrives not after them, more or leſs, as means to happineſs? But how many other ſources of it do we not heedleſsly paſs by, eſteem them not for what they are, or draw far leſs ſatisfaction and pleaſure from them, than might be drawn! The enjoyment of the beauties of nature, the participation in whatever is beautiful and good in the world and is and happens among

mankind; the conſciouſneſs of having acted right and well; the ſentiment of real progreſs on the way of improvement and of perfection; meditation on important objects; the extenſion and rectification of our knowledge and perceptions; the comforts of domeſtic life; ſilent converſe with oneſelf and with a few honeſt and intelligent friends; the pleaſures of beneficence; the joys of piety: what rich inexhauſtible ſources of happineſs are theſe for ſuch as underſtand them and know how to uſe them! What pure ſatisfaction, what real, laſting pleaſure does not the ſage and the chriſtian draw from them! How much more ſatisfaction, how much more pleaſure than all others are able to procure him! Do you alſo underſtand, do you revere, do you uſe theſe ſources of happineſs, my dear friends? Do you give them the preference to all others? Do you tarry with them rather and longer than with others? Is their reſtorative, their invigorating efficacy known to you from experience? Alas, if ye thoughtleſsly and wantonly paſs them by; if ye hold them to be rather ſources of irkſomeneſs and diſguſt than of ſatisfaction and pleaſure; or if ye think, that, ſo long as ye are favoured by youth and fortune, ye may diſpenſe with them without prejudice: then indeed ye cannot be happy, or can be ſo only in a very inferior degree. No, that your complaints, o men, o chriſtians, that your ſad complaints of the want of happineſs may ceaſe to be as unjuſt as they are criminal; uſe at leaſt all the ſources of ſatisfac-

tion which nature and religion open to you, and uſe them with that attention, with that care, with that unremitted induſtry, which the greatneſs of their value deſerves. How ſoon would then the generality of your complaints be ſilenced! How much more rich in means would you find yourſelves than you ever thought! And how much happier would you actually be than you are at preſent!

A fifth cauſe of the deficiency in happineſs is this: We ſeek it more without us than within us, more in what we have than in what we are; more in what we perform and bring to effect than in what we do; more in what others think and believe of us than in what we really are. — This is not the way to happineſs; at leaſt it leads but rarely, but accidentally, only by various turns and windings to the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of it. That which we have and poſſeſs, belongs not at all to ourſelves, is extremely fleeting and unſtable, and juſt as unſtable and fleeting is the ſatisfaction that is built upon it. Only that which we are is really ours, belongs eſſentially to ſelf, and if we have cauſe to be ſatisfied with it then is our ſatisfaction built on a ſolid foundation. That which we perform and bring to effect with our abilities, frequently depends more on favourable circumſtances than on our ingenuity and on our merit; and rarely ſhould we be entirely ſatisfied with what we have done, with the employment of our powers, if we were to judge of them ſolely by the effects: but never ſhould we hold them for loſt, or employed

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in vain if we ſought more to make the beſt uſe of them, and thereby to exerciſe and ſtrengthen them, than to perform great matters with them. Laſtly, the opinions of mankind are as changeable as themſelves, and he that builds the ſtructure of his happineſs upon them, builds it on a quickſand. Only the conſciouſneſs of our increaſing intrinſic perfection and the approbation of our own heart, are laſting goods are never-failing ſources of calm delight. Would ye then be happy, my dear friends; you muſt ſeek your happineſs more within than without you. Be and become all that, on the preſent ſtage of your exiſtence, in your preſent connection with the whole, you may be and become; be and become as intelligent, as wiſe, as good, as virtuous; learn to acquire as complete a command over yourſelf, and to employ and to apply your abilities in as rational and uſeful a manner; learn as cordially to love both God and man, and to fulfil what ye hold to be your duty as willingly and punctually; learn as unremittingly to ſtrive after higher attainments in wiſdom and perfection, and to render yourſelves as capable of the enjoyment of purer delights, as it is poſſible for men and chriſtians in the preſent ſtate to do: ſo will your happineſs reſt on a ſolid foundation. Ye will be ſatisfied with yourſelf and with your condition, becauſe ye will be and do that which, by means of your nature and your connections and according to the will of God, you are deſigned to be and to do; and becauſe it is conformable to your condition, your

preſent and future appointment, and renders you fit for a better, a ſuperior ſtate, in which ye may expect the richeſt amends for every loſs ye have ſuſtained, and the moſt glorious fruits of your labour and pains.

A ſixth cauſe why not more happineſs is found among us, is: becauſe misfortune and unhappineſs are ſo often confounded together in words and expreſſions, and the difference between them is ſeldom remarked with ſufficient preciſion. Undoubtedly there is and happens much misfortune in the world; but all misfortune does not increaſe the ſum of unhappineſs or of miſery. Much misfortune may befall us, we may meet with many adverſe accidents and occurrences, without being thereby unhappy or miſerable. The former, misfortune, is without us: the latter, unhappineſs, or miſery is within us. The former has not always, not neceſſarily, the latter for its conſequence. Happineſs, that is founded merely on proſperity, on outward well-being, vaniſhes indeed immediately with it. But happineſs that reſts principally on wiſdom and virtue and piety, on intrinſic goodneſs and perfection, may indeed be ſhaken by adverſe events, but cannot be deſtroyed. Do we loſe outward goods and advantages, friends and favourites, health and abilities; do our undertakings miſcarry; are our deſigns fruſtrated; do diſappointments attend our expectations: we certainly are not fortunate, misfortune befalls us. But, if we hold theſe matters for what they

they are; if we conſider them in their connection with the will of God and with the laws of order; if we connect the preſent with the paſt and with the future; if we have conſtantly in view the whole of our condition, the whole of our deſignation, and judge partially neither of the one nor the other; if laſtly we regard and uſe all as means to our improvement and completion: ſo ſhall we, even when we meet with misfortune, not ceaſe to be happy. We ſhall not fail of perceiving the great good, the eſſential good that ſtill remains to us, we ſhall feel in a lively manner the great preponderance of it to the evil, and be ſatisfied in the grateful enjoyment of it. Hold not therefore every misfortune for unhappineſs; complain not of a deficiency in happineſs immediately on undergoing a deficiency in the goods of fortune; by no means rank every unfortunate perſon in the claſs of the unhappy; accurately diſcriminate between them in your own condition, and in the condition of mankind in general, if ye would avoid committing the moſt pernicious errors in this moral ſtatement.

To conclude; the laſt cauſe, my pious hearers, why not ſo much happineſs is to be found among us, as might be, is this: we judge of moſt matters too partially: throw every thing, as it were, out of the combination in which it ſtands, and whereby it is that which it is; and thus deprive many goods of their greateſt value, and many evils of the utility and the conſequences whereby they ceaſe to be evil.

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We conſider, we enjoy, we uſe the things of this world not ſufficiently in their connection with the whole, in their connection with the will and the views of the creator, in their connection with the nature and deſtination of man, in their connection with the all-unfolding and all-completing futurity. We judge of the whole immenſe fabric, by ſmall diſtinct fragments of the whole of the infinitely extending chain of human events and fortunes, by the firſt link of it alone. Whereas, did we but accuſtom ourſelves to ſee farther and to contemplate farther; to ſeparate nothing that belongs to ſomething elſe; to force nothing out of its natural combination; and to conſider everything, as much as poſſible, in its varied connection, according to its different relations and effects and conſequences: how many objects would then aſſume a totally different aſpect, how many ſad and diſmal appearances would then put on a brighter form, how many agreeable circumſtances wear a ſtill more agreeable complexion! How many diſquieting doubts, how much ſorrow and trouble would then be quite removed! How very much would the amount of our agreeable ideas and ſenſations, the ſum total of our happineſs be augmented!

Ye know now, my pious hearers, the principal cauſes that diminiſh and conſume your happineſs. Let it be your care to remove them, and to avoid their baleful influence. Improve therefore — that I may compriſe all that has been ſaid in few words — Improve

— Improve therefore carefully your capacity for being happy: enjoy all the good that ye have, and that befalls you, with more conſciouſneſs and conſideration: require and expect not things impoſſible and incompatible: heedleſsly paſs by no ſource of true ſatisfaction and of pure pleaſure, but draw from them all: ſeek for happineſs more within you than without you: diſtinguiſh carefully between adverſity and unhappineſs; and judge of particulars in their connection with the whole, the evil in its connection with the good, the preſent in its connection with the future. So will you infallibly not ſtrive in vain after happineſs, but perpetually be advancing from one degree of it to another.

SERMON XLIX.

Cauſes of the Failure of Happineſs among Mankind.

GOD, thou haſt formed all thy creatures for happineſs, and leaveſt none of them deficient in the neceſſary means of attaining the proper end of their being. Sooner or later, in this way or in that, thou wilt conduct them all to their object, and glorify thyſelf in all as the God of love. To us, whom thou haſt favoured, both as men and as chriſtians, with ſo many advantages, to us thou haſt greatly facilitated and ſmoothed the path to happineſs, and rendered us thereby capable of a much ſuperior degree of it. The more we underſtand of thee, our father, and thy gracious diſpoſitions towards us; the more we are acquainted with our nature and our deſtination: the more contented and happy might and ought we to be even in the preſent life. And if we are not ſo, if we complain of a want of happineſs, it is certainly our own fault. Inſtead of ſearching for truth, and following her ſafe and ſteady light, we allow ourſelves to be deceived by prejudices, dazzled by errors, and purſue a variety of deceitful and fugacious fantoms, glittering before us like the falſe fires which embarraſs the benighted travel-

traveller; ſtill we advance, and ſtill the meteor flies; in vain we double our ſpeed, and reach after what is not; the gay deluſion ſtill mocks our toil and eludes our graſp; yet we ſtill purſue. At laſt, having ſufficiently ſported with our credulity, it vaniſhes at once, and leaves us on the brink of a precipice. We form wrong conceptions of thee and of ourſelves, of our preſent and future deſtination: and how then can we fail of being diſcontented and wretched! Do thou, almighty parent, lead us back from our deviations, by cauſing the light of truth to illuminate us with a brighter beam, and to lead us on a ſafer path. Grant, that we may continually advance in the knowledge of thee and of ourſelves, and more and more willingly and faithfully live up to that knowledge. Bleſs to this end the conſiderations in which we are now to engage. Let them render us thoroughly attentive to the cauſes of our deficiency in happineſs, and continually more careful to avoid and remove them. In filial confidence we aſk this of thee as the votaries of thy ſon Jeſus, and truſting in his promiſes we farther addreſs thee: Our father, &c.

PROV. iii. 21.

My ſon, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep ſound wiſdom and diſcretion.

EXPERIENCE but too well informs us, that numbers of people are far leſs happy, than, according to their natural diſpoſitions and capacities, they

they might be. How were it otherwiſe poſſible that almoſt all men ſhould be more panting and ſtriving after happineſs, than rejoicing in the poſſeſſion of it? Whichever way we turn our eyes we ſee hope, expectation, ardent deſire; but ſcarcely anywhere ſedate and quiet enjoyment of the beautiful and good. And yet of what diverſified, pure, exalted pleaſure, congenial and ſatisfactory to the mind and heart, is man ſuſceptible! What delights are offered him by nature and religion, by the ſenſes and the underſtanding, the viſible and the inviſible, the preſent and the future world! To what height of perfection may he not in his quality both of man and of chriſtian, attain! How wiſe and how virtuous may he not become, and what ſources of ſatisfaction open to himſelf thereby! But how ſeldom does he enjoy that pleaſure! How rarely attain to this perfection! What is more common among mankind than diſcontent, than bitter complaints of the want of happineſs! And how much real miſery is ſeen among them! How comparatively ſmall is the number of the happy, to that of thoſe who are not ſo, or who account themſelves unhappy! All this is matter of experience, and therefore needs no farther proof. But what now may be the reaſon of theſe melancholy appearances? Let us once for all, my pious hearers, circumſtantially inveſtigate the ſubject. Let us ſearch out the cauſes why ſo many perſons are leſs happy, than, according to their natural diſpoſitions and capacities, they might be. The

detection

detection of these causes will perhaps render us more circumspect, and therefore more susceptible of happiness.

Let not wisdom and discretion depart from thine eyes, says our text, and it follows in the original: so shalt thou be happy. Deficiency in wisdom is therefore the principal reason of the deficiency in happiness. And so it is, my pious hearers; if we form wrong notions of the most important objects, and do not behave towards these objects agreeably to their real nature and quality, we cannot possibly be happy. Let us enter more deeply into particulars. False notions of the deity; false notions of man and his appointment; false notions of the worth of outward things: are three no less common than fertile sources of the deficiency of happiness among mankind.

In the first place then, false notions of the deity are one of the principal causes of the deficiency of happiness among mankind. The idea of a God, of a supreme, all-governing, all-ruling spirit is indispensably necessary to our happiness. All our feelings and conceptions oblige us to recur to this idea, and without it we are unable to explain anything satisfactorily, to find any stay for our affections, any tranquillity and consolation for our heart. But how different must the influence of this idea be upon our happiness, according as it is differently raised, according as it is agreeable to truth, or repugnant to it! And how rare are just conceptions of the deity,

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notwithſtanding all the information imparted to us on that head by nature and experience, by reaſon and ſcripture! Indeed, if thou repreſent to thyſelf, my chriſtian brother, God, as a man, who is exalted above us merely by power and authority; if thou aſcribe to him human weakneſſes and paſſions; if thou take him for an auſtere maſter and judge, prompt to take umbrage, to be offended and incenſed, but difficult to be appeaſed and pacified, for an arbitrary being, judging and acting, not by fixt principles, not by immutable laws, but by mere caprice and accidental impulſe; if thou ſee thy deſpotic ſovereign arrayed in all his terrors, raging and puniſhing and hurling his vindictive bolts in every unuſual appearance of nature, in every misfortune that alights on thee or others; if thou believe that he preſcribed us laws, and obliged us to his worſhip and to his ſervice on his own account; if thou imagine, that, like men, and as if actuated by their humours, he is captious about his honour, and leaves no fault, no treſpaſs that we commit againſt him, unrevenged; if thou thus think of God: then indeed this ſentiment cannot advance, cannot confirm thy happineſs, it muſt rather very often ſhake the fabric of it to the very foundation, and keep it always in a tottering ſtate. Fear and hope, terror and preſumption muſt ever alternately have poſſeſſion of thee. And how can laſting tranquillity then abide in thy breaſt? How canſt thou love ſuch a God with filial affection? How heartily rejoice in his

his exiſtence, and in all that he diſpoſes and does? How entirely rely upon him, and place thy complete and unſhaken confidence in him?

No, in order that the ſentiment of deity may have theſe effects upon thee; may eſtabliſh thy happineſs, and preſerve the ſtructure of it from demolition or decay; that this ſentiment may be ever welcome and deſirable to thee, that whenever it preſents itſelf to thy mind, it may diffuſe light and ſerenity and content throughout thy ſoul; that it may alleviate thy afflictions, ſweeten thy pleaſures, refine thy ſatisfactions, and open to thee ſources of yet purer, yet ſuperior joys: thou muſt form to thyſelf juſter and more conſolatory notions of the deity. Thou muſt learn to know and to revere thy God as the father of thee and of all mankind, as the wiſeſt, the moſt kind and gracious parent, who knows and loves thee and all his children on earth, provides for them all, and intends and promotes the happineſs of all; as a father who never ceaſes to be tenderly inclined towards us, whether he chaſten or reward us, whether he diſpenſe to us proſperity or adverſity, life or death; as a father, whoſe ordinances and ſtatutes, whoſe diſpenſations and corrections, whoſe laws and commandments have nothing in view but the welfare of his children, and the beſt that is poſſible in every particular inſtance. Thou muſt learn to revere God as a being who is by no means in need of our ſervices, whoſe perfection our behaviour can neither increaſe nor diminiſh, who on our ac-

count alone requires to be loved, honoured, and feared by us, and who finds his ſupreme felicity in imparting happineſs to his creatures that are ſuſceptible of happineſs; as a being who is eſſential love, and in the emanations of his wiſe affection, ordains, decrees, commands, permits and does whatever is and what ſhall be. If thou conceive of God, as nature and the chriſtian doctrine ſo audibly proclaim him to us, this ſentiment will be the richeſt ſource and the firmeſt ſupport of thy happineſs. Religion will not be a burthen, but a pleaſure to thee; the law of God will not be a harſh obligation, but an affectionate caution againſt miſery and folly; piety will not be a troubleſome reſtraint, but the higheſt diſtinction and the nobleſt employment of thy rational ſpirit. Everywhere wilt thou find thyſelf ſurrounded with evidences of the fatherly providence and love of thy God, but nowhere wilt thou diſcover traces of an auſtere tyrannical will or of a deſpotical ſway. Nothing of all that is and happens in the world will perplex, amaze, or inordinately affright thee. To him, the All-wiſe and All-gracious, thou wilt calmly reſign thyſelf and all thy fortunes, and the fortunes of all thy brethren, and for them and for thyſelf wilt expect nought but good, and conſtantly the beſt. And how contented, how happy will and muſt this make thee!

Wrong notions of man and his deſtination are a ſecond, no leſs fruitful ſource of the deficiency of happineſs among mankind. In order to be happy, I ſhould

ſhould know myſelf, ſhould underſtand my powers, I ſhould learn duly to eſtimate both, and neither take them for greater or leſs, neither for better or worſe than they really are. I ſhould know who I am, what place I occupy among the creatures of God, what I may and can perform, to what end I am here, and what ſhall become of me hereafter. How ſhall I otherwiſe properly uſe my powers, and worthily fill my ſtation? How enjoy with conſciouſneſs the benefits that are connected with the uſe of the former and with the poſſeſſion of the latter? How become that for becoming which I have the materials and the capacities? How ſeek and find the pleaſures, the ſatisfactions that are adapted to my nature, and avoid the miſery of which it warns me, and from which it would protect me? But are indeed juſt, perſpicuous notions of theſe intereſting and important objects, very common amongſt mankind? What is man leſs acquainted with than with himſelf, and what does he leſs reflect upon than the proper end of his being? No wonder if he miſtake the road to happineſs, and wander about in a thouſand deviations. Indeed, o man, if thou take thyſelf for a creature that has no eſſential advantages over the beaſts of the field, that, like them, is entirely tranſitory, entirely duſt, and will ſoon return again for ever to the duſt from whence he derives his origin; if thou art blind to thy reaſon, thy liberty, thy reſemblance to deity, the ſpecial prerogatives of thy nature; if thou fondly dream that thou art here with-

out deſign, without a proper deſignation, or merely deſigned for ſenſual occupations and ſenſual enjoyments, and therefore think all thy deſires and hopes and proſpects confined within the narrow circle of labours and recreations, of ſorrows and joys allotted thee in this life; how canſt thou be happy? How defend thyſelf from diſcontent and deſpondence? How ſoon wouldſt and muſt thou be ſatiated even to ſurfeit, of all the charms of animal voluptuouſneſs and refined ſenſuality, even till life itſelf with all its round of deceitful and fugacious joys, became a burden! What could incite thee to the cultivation of thy mind, to generous deeds, to public ſpirited undertakings, to ſtrive after higher degrees of virtue and perfection, and by the pure and divine pleaſure connected with it, alleviate and ſweeten all the troubles and ſorrows of thy preſent ſtate? No, true, ſubſtantial happineſs is not for the man who in imagination degrades himſelf to the level of the beaſts of the field, and in death expects no better fate than theirs. But the road to happineſs is no leſs difficult to thoſe, who, by falſe conceptions of the preſent ſtate of man and of the relations in which he ſtands towards God, allows himſelf to be perplexed and confounded. Yes, my chriſtian brother, if by falſe interpretation of certain paſſages of ſcripture, thou take man for a creature, who, from his very birth, lies under ſentence of condemnation, and is an object of divine diſpleaſure, for a creature who muſt look upon all the trouble, all the labour, all the ſickneſſes

ſickneſſes and pains, all the ſorrows and ſufferings that are connected with his preſent ſtate, as the puniſhment due to his tranſgreſſions and the tranſgreſſions of his original parents; for a creature corrupt throughout, that has no ability to goodneſs, but a decided propenſity to whatever is iniquitous and evil; for a creature that is tied down to various and important duties, and yet is not able to diſcharge them; for a creature, in ſhort, that is deſtined here to one continued round of diſtreſſes and ſufferings, that ought to conſider this earth, in ſome ſort, as a place of condemnation, that ſhould ſtudiouſly ſhun all the joys it offers him, and ſtrive after future happineſs by the way of tribulation and the moſt auſtere ſelf-denial; if thou form ſuch conceptions of man and his deſignation: how difficult, how impoſſible muſt it ſeem to thee to be truly happy! How canſt thou thus be ſenſible to thy moral dignity? How think and act conformably to it? How cheerfully and unweariedly exert thy powers, and perform any good with them? How canſt thou thus love, and out of love obey, thy creator and father? How exult in thy preſent life and be happy in the glad expectation of the future? No, wouldſt thou enjoy this happineſs; form to thyſelf juſter notions of man and of his deſtination. Hold thyſelf to be that, which thou art; do honour to thy nature; be ſenſible to thy powers; miſtake not the place which the creator has aſſigned thee in his kingdom, and the dignity by which he has diſtinguiſhed thee. Reaſon and freedom are the patent of thy nobility;

by them thou art of divine deſcent, art formed after the likeneſs of God, haſt reſemblance with the ſupremely perfect mind and canſt be ever approaching nearer it by wiſdom and virtue. Art thou withal a weak and very limited, a ſinful creature; yet are there great materials, great capacities in thee, which may be wrought and unfolded to an amazingly high degree of perfection. Yes, thou canſt and mayſt do much, not indeed by thy own ſtrength, but the power of the creator is ever operative in thee, and his aid is as certain to thee, as thou art ſincerely deſirous and really in want of it. Thou art not entirely duſt, not entirely ſubject to corruption: thy ſpirit is immortal, thou art advancing to a ſuperior ſtate; here thou wilt not be all that thou mayſt and art deſigned to become; here thou often ſoweſt, without reaping; here thou canſt neither do nor enjoy much of that beautiful and good which thou art deſirous of doing and enjoying. But there are eternities before thee, where thou mayſt hope to raiſe thyſelf from one ſtage to another, and to become continually more perfect and happy. The God who formed thee, has formed thee to happineſs, to ever increaſing happineſs. He is and everlaſtingly remains thy father, and loves thee and cares for thee on every ſtep of thy preſent and future exiſtence. And if thou thus agreeably to truth conceive of thyſelf and thy deſtination, my chriſtian brother, how greatly wilt thou thus promote thy happineſs! What a bleſſed ſentiment of thy dignity, of thy celeſtial origin and of thy grand deſtination will pervade thy ſoul!

ſoul! How gladly wilt thou employ thy powers, and how much pleaſure wilt thou find in the employment of them! How unweariedly fulfil thy duty and work at thy improvement, and how cheerfully await the fruits of it in a ſuperior ſtate of being! How light will be the burdens, and how ſupportable the ſufferings of this life! How much more important to thee will be all that thou art, that thou haſt, that thou doſt and enjoyeſt. Since nothing will be unattended by the greateſt variety of conſequences to thee, and thou ſeeſt before thee an everlaſting duration! And what light muſt this proſpect diffuſe over all the events that befal thee and thy brethren, what doubt muſt it not diſpel, what trouble not huſh into peace! Yes, he that has conſtantly in view his affinity with God, and his appointment to immortality, cannot be otherwiſe than happy.

Wrong notions of the worth of outward things are a third ſource of the deficiency of happineſs among mankind. Innumerable objects ſurround me on all ſides, which may give me pleaſure or diſpleaſure, which may be uſeful or injurious to me. Here ſhine before me honour and authority, there riches and opulence glitter in my view; here a variety of pleaſures and amuſements, there eaſe and conveniency. All promiſe me pleaſure and happineſs; all may even more or leſs contribute to it. But how many wretches, how many victims of diſappointment do I perceive around me, who have not been able to find in theſe goods what they ſought for in them, and what they expected from

them! How many murmurs of diſcontent do I hear from the circle of the rich and great, of the powerful and mighty, of thoſe that are called the favourites of fortune! Would I not join my voice in theſe murmurs, and increaſe the number of the diſappointed; I muſt form a juſt eſtimate and judgment of the value of theſe things; I muſt learn to take them for what they really are, and not expect more from them than they are able to yield. And indeed on this uncommonly much depends in regard to our happineſs. And yet how falſe is the point of view whence the generality of men behold theſe objects! How exaggerated the value they attribute to them! Wealth, honour, authority and power, pleaſures of ſenſe, an eaſy, voluptuous, thoughtleſs life, uninterrupted health and vigour, tumultuous diverſions, a ſplendid train, how highly are theſe goods, theſe diſtinctions, uſually prized! In the judgment of but too many perſons, they conſtitute the moſt important, the moſt material part of human happineſs. Objects that are worthy of our moſt ardent deſires, our unremitted indeavours, the moſt aſſiduous labour, the moſt ſtrenuous exertions; objects which we cannot diſpenſe with, cannot loſe, without being more or leſs wretched; objects in compariſon whereof all the advantages of mind and heart, all the pleaſures of reflection and piety, all the joys of virtue and beneficence come into no conſideration. But are they really ſo, my dear friends, and can we poſſibly be happy, ſo long as we take them to be ſo?

Are then theſe things in our power? Can we always acquire and poſſeſs them in the proportion or the degree we could wiſh? Does the poſſeſſion of them ſoothe and ſatisfy the affections of our heart? Is it liable neither to alteration nor decay? Can it by nothing be raviſhed from us? Is it equally eſtimable and equally ſatisfying at all times, in all circumſtances, in age as in youth, in days of ſickneſs as in days of health, in ſolitude as in ſociety? Does it accompany us in the grave and in the future world? And if it do not this, if the poſſeſſion of outward diſtinctions do not this; if all theſe objects are extremely fleeting and evaneſcent; if numberleſs accidents may embitter them or ſnatch them away; if they leave the heart empty, and will all be buried with us in death: how frail and tottering muſt be the fabric of happineſs that is built upon them! How eaſily may it be ſhaken to its foundations, how ſoon be entirely deſtroyed! No, wouldſt thou be happy, o man; learn to know better the worth of theſe things; learn to treat them as means and not as ends, to conſider them as things, that lawfully acquired and wiſely employed, may promote thy happineſs and that of thy brethren, but never can really compoſe it; as things which thou mayſt have or not have, poſſeſs or loſe, without being therefore wiſer or more unwiſe, better or worſe, without cauſing the leaſt detriment to the perfection of thy ſpirit, the only baſis of all true and laſting happineſs; prize theſe things only in as much, ſeek and love them

them only in as much, as they may expand thy intellectual powers, ſet thee in uſeful motion, improve and exerciſe thee, and furniſh thee with means and opportunities for beneficence. Learn greatly to prefer the inward to the outward, what is really thy own to what is borrowed, and what remains with thee for ever, and accompanies thee on every ſtage of thy being, to all that endures but a moment, or vaniſhes in death. Thinkeſt thou thus of the value of earthly things; ſeekeſt and uſeſt thou them to ſuch noble purpoſes: then will they never deceive thee, never deſtroy thy content, and thou wilt never fail of thy object, ſubſtantial happineſs, whether thou be poor or rich, live in ſplendor or in obſcurity, fill this or the other ſtation among thy brethren, and whether thy courſe be rugged or plain, ſhort or long. He who makes wiſdom and virtue the ultimate object of all his deſires and aims, and regards and uſes all outward goods and advantages only as means thereto, muſt and will as certainly be happy, as he is ſuſceptible of happineſs.

SERMON L.

Cauſes of the Failure of Happineſs among Mankind.

GOD, thou haſt formed us, thy creatures, thy children, for happineſs. Of this neither nature nor religion, reaſon nor experience will allow us to doubt. Happineſs is the ultimate aim of all that thou diſpoſeſt and doſt, that thou decreeſt and permitteſt. None of us therefore are wanting in capacities and means for preponderant pleaſure, if we do but employ theſe capacities and means with proper care and fidelity. But in this we indeed too often fail. We neglect to do what might make us contented and happy, or we do it not with ſufficient continuance and zeal, we ſoon grow weary of the attention, the prudence, the exertion which it requires, and then complain of the want of ſatisfaction and happineſs. The prize indeed we would heartily wiſh to obtain, but the way to it ſeems too difficult and toilſome. Inſtead of hearkening to thy parental call, the dictates of wiſdom and virtue, we lend a willing ear to the clamours of inordinate luſts and paſſions, blinded by them we roam in various deviations, and recede ever farther and farther from the glorious prize which thou haſt ſet before us. God,

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we are ſenſible how fooliſhly, how culpably we often act, and how unjuſt are our complaints. Yes, we are ourſelves to blame, if we be not happy. Oh may we perceive this truth with inward conviction, may we ſee the miſtakes which prevent us in the enjoyment of happineſs in their proper light and know them to be ſuch, and then in perfect earneſtneſs ſet about freeing ourſelves from them! Bleſs to the promotion of theſe ends, the reflections we are now about to begin on theſe important ſubjects. Grant that we may deal with ſtrict impartiality towards ourſelves, and direct the whole of our attention to our own ſituation. We requeſt it of thee as chriſtians with filial boldneſs, and addreſs thee farther in then ame and in the prayer of our lord. Our father, &c.

PROV. iii. 21.

My ſon, let not them depart from thine eyes; keep ſound wiſdom and diſcretion.

THE more plainly we ſee into the cauſes of a deficiency in anything, the eaſier it is to be remedied, if in general it admit of a remedy. We often languiſh under the preſſures of a want, only becauſe we do not rightly perceive whence it ariſes, on what it is founded, and from what ſources we may and ſhould draw the ſupply we are in need of. Thus it is in regard to human happineſs. We often, but too often complain of the want of it, and yet have only

only obſcure or confuſed ideas of what theſe complaints are founded on, and of the cauſes why we ſuffer this want. To reflect frequently on this ſubject, and to examine ſeriouſly into it, ſhould be of as much moment to us as happineſs itſelf; and it is doubtleſs one inſtance, among numberleſs others, of the ſhameful inconſiſtency of man, that he is apt ſo frequently to complain, and yet, from levity and indolence will do little or nothing for coming at the true ground of theſe complaints, and for applying a remedy to them. To call your attention, my dear friends, to this matter, was the deſign of my laſt diſcourſe, as it is alſo of the preſent. We lately diſcovered three, no leſs common than fruitful ſources of the deficiency of happineſs among mankind: falſe notions of the deity; falſe notions of man and his appointment; falſe notions of the value of extraneous objects. Let us to-day proceed in theſe reſearches, and diſcuſs ſome other, perhaps leſs remarked, but no leſs efficient and pernicious cauſes of our deficiency in happineſs.

We often require impoſſibilities; we overlook a great deal of the beautiful and good in the world; we ſeek our happineſs more without us than within us; we do not ſet earneſtly enough about it: we neglect the grand art of enjoyment; and think too partially concerning ourſelves and all that is without us. Six faults that muſt be extremely injurious to our purſuits and exertions after happineſs. Let us examine them more particularly.

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We not unfrequently, then, require impoſſibilities in order to be happy; and how can we thus obtain our end? In our preſent ſtate we are caſed in a body, frail in its texture, and artificially contrived, very eaſily hurt and injured, equally diſpoſed to procure and to cauſe us diſagreeable as agreeable ſenſations, and to the diſſolution and demolition whereof a thouſand things, both within and without us, are conſtantly at work: and we require, that this our body ſhould never be injured and hurt, that we ſhould feel no pain, that we ſhould enjoy an uninterrupted health, and even in age poſſeſs the vivacity and the vigour of youth. Is not this to be called, requiring ſomewhat contradictory, ſomewhat impoſſible? We here dwell upon an earth, where all the great as well as the little, the good as well as the evil, is ſubject to inconſtancy and decay, where all is in a perpetual ebb and flow, and alternately blooming and fading, increaſing and declining, ariſing and paſſing away, living and dying, where nothing is ultimate end, but all is means to higher ends: and we require that we ſhould preſerve our goods, our poſſeſſions, our advantages, at one time as well as at another, that we ſhould loſe nothing of them, that we ſhould be diſturbed by nothing in the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of them, that our fortunate circumſtances, amidſt all the changeable things that ſurround us, ſhould be alone unchangeable. Is not this to be called, requiring ſomewhat contradictory, ſomewhat impoſſible? We here live among men, who have the ſame wants, the

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ſame appetites and paſſions that we have, who are ſeeking the ſame pleaſures and advantages that we ſeek; who are purſuing the ſame objects that we purſue: and we require, that no one ſhould croſs us in our way, that nothing ſhould hinder or retard us in our endeavours, that all our projects ſhould ſucceed, that we ſhould conſtantly attain the mark at which we run, and at which ſo many others are running alſo. Is not this to be called, requiring ſomewhat contradictory, ſomewhat impoſſible? We are in ſhort very limited beings, are at the firſt ſtage of our human exiſtence, have our viſible horizon as contracted as our ſphere of action, can ſurvey and comprehend only little individual parts of the whole to which we belong, and ſtumble, like children, at every ſtep we take: and we require never to err, never to miſtake, but to penetrate all, to fathom all, to unveil the hidden myſteries of nature, to look into the depths of the divine decrees, and to operate around us as far as we can reach in our imagination. Is not this to be called, requiring ſomewhat incompatible with our nature, ſomewhat impoſſible? And if we allow a requeſt that has ſuch matters for its object to become clamorous, how can we be contented and happy? — No, would we be ſo, my dear friends; let us require no other than human happineſs; happineſs fitted for men, for inhabitants of this earth, for creatures like us; happineſs adapted to our nature, to our capacities and powers, to our ſituation, to our circumſtances, to our connections with outward objects and

and with the reſt of mankind. Let us reſpect all the limits which a wiſe providence has ſet to them and to us in all theſe regards, and never think as if we, imperceptibly ſmall particles of the aggregate, were the aggregate itſelf, or as if we, of all the children of God in heaven and on earth, were alone deſerving of his providence and love.

Want of attention to the beautiful and good that is in the world and among mankind, is another cauſe of our deficiency in happineſs. There is certainly much beautiful and good in the world and among mankind, that even the inattentive cannot entirely overlook, and not perceive without pleaſing ſenſations. They are ſtriking to every eye; they exhilarate and rejoice every man, and their charms are irreſiſtible. Such undeniably are many phænomena and ſcenes in inanimate nature, ſuch are many occurrences and pleaſures in ſocial life. Who can remain inſenſible and not pleaſed at the ſight of a beautiful morning, of a plentiful harveſt, of a good and generous action? But not all, not the generality of what is beautiful and good, is of this kind. The inattentive, the careleſs, not unfrequently walk among thouſands of beauties in the natural and the moral world, unmoved, neither obſerve nor ſee the moſt beautiful diſpoſitions, the moſt promiſing capacities, the moſt amiable qualities, the moſt virtuous actions of their fellow-creatures; perceive neither bloſſom nor fruit, neither commencement nor completion; and then complain of the want of food for

for their mind and heart. Thus they thirſt amidſt the moſt abundant ſources of pleaſure, and pine with hunger at a ſumptuous banquet. Matter for happineſs ſurrounds them on all ſides, but they wantonly reject it, from thoughtleſſneſs and levity. And who but themſelves is to blame for their deficiency of happineſs? Would we ſupply it in regard to ourſelves, my dear friends, let us not walk, with hoodwinked eyes and with contracted hearts, through a world full of beauties and bleſſings. Let us rather open them both to their various impreſſions, and even be attentive to the beautiful and good that has nothing perhaps inviting or alluring in its outward aſpect, and which only the more practiſed obſerver is capable of diſcovering and enjoying. How greatly ſhould we thus enlarge the theatre of our pleaſure, and multiply the means of our ſatisfaction and happineſs! How often would labour and toil, limitations and difficulties, afflictions and pain, put on a quite different ſhape! How often would unexpected beams of light iſſue forth from the thickeſt darkneſs! How often ſhould we then diſcover the precious bloſſoms of fruit, of improvement, of perfection, the wiſeſt preparatives to pleaſures and joys of various kinds, where before we fancied we ſaw nothing but effects and cauſes of want and of miſery! Yes, the more attentive we are, the leſs ſhall we be able to miſcalculate the great preponderance of the beautiful and good that is in the world and amongſt mankind, and with ſo much the more confidence

ſhall we expect the ſtill greater ſuperiority of it in futurity; and what ſources of ſatisfaction and pleaſure would and muſt this open to us. If God, the ſupremely perfect ſpirit, beholds with complacency all that he has made, finds all right and good, and builds thereon his ſovereign felicity, then muſt alſo ours increaſe according to the degree in which we are ſenſible to the beauty and goodneſs of all his works.

A third cauſe of the deficiency in happineſs among mankind is: that we ſeek it more without us than within us, and take more concern about the appearance, than about the real poſſeſſion and enjoyment of it. However abſurd this error may ſeem and actually is, nothing is yet more common. Surely happineſs is ſomewhat that is entirely and abſolutely within us; it is a particular ſtate of our mind; it conſiſts in what we are, and not in what we ſeem to be, in the agreeable ideas and ſenſations which we have, and not in thoſe which men attribute to us. If all the world, at the time when I am ſick and in pain, ſhould hold me to be in health, I ſhould not therefore be in health, nor loſe the ſentiment of my pains. Undeniable as this is, yet we but too frequently think and act, in regard to happineſs, as if the reverſe of it were true. We do not take half the pains to awaken within us agreeable ideas and ſenſations concerning what we are and have and do, and to regale ourſelves upon them, as to give others great or good opinions of it. We will abſolutely

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be accounted by numbers of people for intelligent, for virtuous, for wealthy, for great, for important, for beautiful and ſtrong, we will be looked upon and praiſed by them as eminently fortunate; and, though we even were all this, but not held to be ſo by others, we ſhould think ourſelves more or leſs unhappy. Thus we are ever ſeeking to be happy in the judgment of others, more than in deed and in truth. Thus we very often deny ourſelves the actual enjoyment of many pleaſures and ſatisfactions, and forego the uſe of various accommodations and comforts of life, merely in order to keep up the appearance of theſe or of ſtill greater advantages and means of pleaſure, in the eyes of the world. But how defective, how variable muſt the happineſs be that is built on ſuch foundations! Do we not then paſs the greater part of our lives remote from other men, and left to ourſelves? Shall we therefore leſs feel the defects of our mind, of our heart, of our body, of our whole condition, will our wants be leſs urgent and painful, becauſe we conceal them from others? Will their favourable opinion of us actually give us the underſtanding, the talents, the abilities, the ingenuity, the peace, the content, the ſtrength, we are in want of? And ſhall we be always able to deceive and to blind them? Will no movements of envy, of jealouſy, of partiality, of malice, weaken or alter the good opinion they entertain of us? What is more fluctuating than the judgment of mankind, and what is more frail than the happineſs that is founded on it. No, let us ſeek this

happineſs in ourſelves, in what we really are and have and do, and not without us, not in the opinion entertained of us by others.

But let us alſo actually ſeek, earneſtly ſeek this happineſs. For here too lurks an important cauſe of the failure of it. We do not ſtrive earneſtly enough about it. We but too often hold happineſs to be ſomewhat accidental, ſomewhat that falls to a man's lot without his concurrence, ſomewhat that is not to be acquired, that we ſhould wait for, and when it comes to us ſhould accept and enjoy. With the goods of fortune this is indeed the caſe, my pious hearers, but not with happineſs. We may certainly, by our birth, by our outward ſituation, by advantageous connections with others, by favourable accidents, become rich, great, powerful, but all theſe things cannot make us happy, cannot give us peace of mind, cannot render us pleaſed or ſatisfied. This we can only be by earneſt, perſevering efforts. If however we do not reſign the buſineſs entirely to chance, yet we but too often imagine, that, in order to be happy, we have only to aſk it in prayer of God, at the ſame time taking care to obſerve certain holy ceremonies and rites of worſhip. God is indeed the author of all good, the fountain of all happineſs, and fervent prayer is an excellent means for rendering us capable of it. But everything in its own order. Happineſs is a ſtate of our mind, a mode of thinking and feeling, which does not ariſe in us at once, but by little and little, and is

not the fruit of an immediate inſpiration of God, but of the proper uſe of the faculties granted us by him, and of the prediſpoſals which his wiſe goodneſs has to that end made in nature and in religion. Let us therefore exert our abilities, and make uſe of the inſtitutions eſtabliſhed by God, if we would be happy. Let us expect nothing from chance, but all from our activity and from our induſtry and from the bleſſing that God has annexed to it. Ever to think more adequately of ourſelves and of our deſtination; ever to judge more juſtly of the value of things; above all, ever more carefully to watch over our affections and appetites; ever better to regulate all our inclinations; to be ever more completely becoming maſter of ourſelves; to connect the preſent ever more intimately with the future; and to let the love of God and man become continually more predominant in us: in theſe employments we ſhould unweariedly exert all our faculties and all the helps that God has given us; and this ſhould be our moſt zealous, unintermitted endeavour, if we would be happy and be ever becoming happier.

Neither ſhould we, fifthly, neglect the art, the grand art of enjoyment, if we would not have reaſon to complain of a deficiency in happineſs. Poſſeſſion and enjoyment are two very different things. The former is far more common than the latter. After the former every one ſtrives, while but too many entirely neglect the latter. Every one would have and poſſeſs a great deal of the beautiful and good,

and continually more and more of the beautiful and good, yet comparatively there are but few who rightly know how to enjoy the beautiful and good which they actually have and poſſeſs. This requires a ſerioufneſs, an attention, an aptitude in reflection, a repoſe and ſerenity of mind, a natural and unvitiated taſte, that but few men can boaſt of. Which of us does not poſſeſs a variety of intellectual and ſenſible faculties and endowments and goods? To which of us do not various ſources of pleaſure and joy ſtand open? Which of us is abſolutely deſtitute of all capacity to draw from them, and to aſſuage his thirſt after happineſs? And wherefore do we not? Wherefore do we it ſo ſeldom? Becauſe, in the unremitted endeavour after poſſeſſion, we forget to attend to enjoyment. We intend gladly to uſe our faculties when we have performed this or that matter with them; we intend peaceably to enjoy our goods when we have increaſed them to a certain degree; we intend to rejoice in our underſtanding, in our virtue, in our hope of immortality, when the former have reached their perfection, and we are become partakers of the latter. No, my dear friends, would we not only be happy in future, but likewiſe be ſo now: let us not content ourſelves with the means to happineſs, but actually employ them. Let us cheerfully and thankfully enjoy all the abilities, all the endowments that God has granted us, all the pleaſures and delights which nature and religion offer us, and endeavour by all the means we

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can deviſe, to ſweeten, to enhance, to multiply their enjoyment. And this we ſhall do if we enjoy with inward conſciouſneſs all the beautiful and good which we perceive within us and without us; if we frequently, with a ſerene and quiet mind, reflect upon it, and figure to ourſelves in a lively manner its great value, its various and cloſe connection with our welfare and the welfare of our brethren; if we conſider all in reference to God, as teſtimonies of his providence and love, as pledges of his continual grace and favour; if we ſecure our hearts from inordinate violent paſſions and at the ſame time take pains to preſerve our taſte unvitiated and free. So ſhall we, even with a very inferior portion of talents and endowments, of means to pleaſure and ſatisfaction, enjoy more real happineſs, than a thouſand others who have a ſuperfluity of all theſe things.

Yet one more cauſe of our deficiency in happineſs is laſtly this: We think on all things and concerning all things too partially. Our thoughts, our ſenſations, our proſpects and hopes comprehend too little; they uniformly adhere to ſingle objects, to detached particles and circumſtances. We think not frequently enough on the conſequences of things, and on their cloſe and indiſſoluble connection and concatenation with each other. Indeed if we think ſolely on the labours and toils of this life, but not on the various and noble fruits of them; ſolely on the pains and ſufferings that befall us, but not on their ſalutary influence on our moral improvement and perfection; if we look ſolely on

the bad, but not on the good ſide, ſolely on the adverſe fortunes, but not on the glorious deſtination of our fellow-creatures; if we conſider the evil independently of its connection with the good, and the preſent independently of its connection with the future; clouds and thick darkneſs muſt encompaſs us on all ſides, we muſt find on all ſides occaſions for diſſatisfaction and complaint. But why then do we divide in our thoughts, what in its nature and in the deſign of God is ſo inſeparably connected? Why do we ſo contract our mind and our heart, ſince both of them are capable of ſurveying and of embracing ſo much? No, let us rather expand both the one and the other, not always dwell on the detached parts of theſe things, but remark their adherence, and connect the parts with the whole to which they belong, the preſent with the future, time with eternity. This will clear up much, unravel much, cauſe us to find many things far more beautiful and far better, than they apparently were; it will change many of our ſorrows into joys; the faireſt hopes and proſpects will be the inſeparable companions of our life; and ſo ſhall we far more exultingly enjoy the preſent, and far more comfortably expect the future; we ſhall therefore befar more happy.

SERMON LI.

Cauſes of the Deficiency in Social Pleaſure.

GOD, thou haſt formed us for ſocial life: and how abundant the ſources of happineſs which thou haſt thus opened to us! The more intimately thou haſt connected us together; the more dependent thou haſt made us on each other; the more reciprocal duties thou haſt enjoined us: the greater is the pleaſure which we may procure to each other and mutually enjoy. Wants, imperfections, infirmities, failings, propenſities, ſorrows and joys, labours and employments, all draw us nearer together, and communicate to us motives and means to ſerve, to aſſiſt, to gratify one another, and mutually to render the journey of life more eaſy and pleaſant. With the practice of every ſocial duty thou haſt aſſociated ſatisfaction and felicity, and only vice can render our connections and intercourſe irkſome and pernicious. Oh that we were ſenſible to thy gracious deſigns, and endeavoured always more completely to anſwer them! That ſocial life might be and afford to us all that according to thy benign purpoſes and by means of our capacities it might and ſhould be and afford! Oh that cordial benevolence and chriſtian phi-

philanthropy always actuated us likewiſe in this reſpect and regulated all our words and actions! How ſecure and contented ſhould we live among our brethren, and carry on our dealings with them! How much ſatisfaction ſhould we mutually enjoy and promote! It is our intention at preſent to meditate on this important branch of human happineſs. Do thou beſtow a bleſſing on theſe our meditations; that they may lead us to the knowledge of our failings in this particular, and to the diligent correction of them. Theſe our petitions we offer up to thy divine majeſty with filial confidence as the votaries of Jeſus; and in firm reliance on his promiſes conclude them in the form of words which he vouchſafed to give us. Our father, &c.

PROV. iii. 21.

My ſon, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep ſound wiſdom and diſcretion.

SOCIAL life and its pleaſures are unqueſtionably a very productive ſource of human happineſs. Here one man communicates to another his agreeable ideas and ſenſations, his views, his hopes, his ſatisfactions, and thus both the one and the other are multiplied and brought into more general circulation. Here all participate in the beautiful and good, which each in particular poſſeſſes and does and enjoys, and in ſome meaſure make them their own. Here every one forgets what is diſagreeable and trouble-

troubleſome in his ſtation and calling, the cares and fatigues of a buſy and laborious life, and enjoys the fruits of his diligence and induſtry. Here exertion gives place to relaxation, labour to reſt, preparative to enjoyment. Here, in free and eaſy converſe, without profeſſed deſign we reciprocally teach and learn, give and receive. Here the individual feels himſelf leſs weak, leſs ignorant, leſs defective in conjunction with his brethren; their perceptions and abilities to him ſeem rather the common bank and capital of human perceptions and abilities, than the private property of their owner. Here greater ſprightlineſs, greater liberty, greater frankneſs and confidence reign than in the circle of ordinary affairs. So many advantages, my pious hearers, which are doubtleſs highly calculated to promote human pleaſure and happineſs. But do they in reality promote them to that extent which they might and ought? Do they come up to the expectations which we commonly and juſtly form from them? Is and affords ſocial life to us all that it might and ſhould be and afford to us? How often do we hear complaints, of the want of ſocial pleaſure, of the want of ſocial happineſs! Theſe complaints indeed are ſeldom loud; they are generally ſtifled by falſe ſhame: they are however intelligible enough to the humane and affectionate obſerver of what paſſes among his brethren. He ſees on all hands forced jovialty, feigned mirth, deceived expectations, diſappointed hopes; perſons who pretend to ſatisfaction and pleaſure, where they have enjoyed neither the

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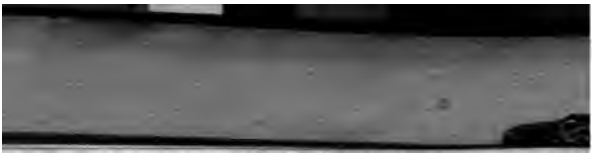
one nor the other. Therefore a general defect of ſocial happineſs, and ſuppreſſed or checked complaints of this defect. And what may be the reaſons of this defect and of theſe complaints? We will now proceed to take them into conſideration, my pious hearers. The better we are acquainted with the ſources of an evil, the eaſier it will be for us to ſtop them. Having recently in two diſcourſes inveſtigated the more general cauſes of the defect of happineſs among mankind, we will now proceed to inquire into the particular cauſes of their failure in ſocial happineſs.

We bring into ſociety too little capacity for pleaſure; we expect too much, or quite incompatible things from it; we allow prejudice and faſhion to deprive us of the true and proper enjoyment of it: theſe are the three primary cauſes why ſocial life is and yields not more to us, why it procures us not more happineſs.

We bring therefore firſt too little capacity for pleaſure, and particularly for more refined pleaſure, into ſociety. Every one ſeeks and expects pleaſure from the ſocial intercourſe with others; the want of it and the impoſſibility of fully enjoying it alone, is the principal motive that brings mankind nearer together, and aſſociates them with one another: but every one is not capable of this pleaſure. Of ſuch pleaſures indeed, as merely diſtract and ſtun, but leave the heart void and occaſion ſhame and pain in the recollection, every one is capable: but how frequently, how lamentably will he be deceived, who con-

confines himself to them and seeks his happiness in them! How completely does he miss of his aim! But more refined pleasures, which occupy not only the senses, but also the heart and the mind, imply capacities and aptitudes, which are by no means common. To the participation in such pleasures and to the promotion of them, virtues and knowledge of various kinds are requisite. — In the first place knowledge. By this term I mean not scientific knowledge, not properly erudition. This may indeed supply the noblest entertainment among intimate friends who have it; yet in mixed societies it no otherwise appears than incidentally to correct some pernicious error, or to bring some generally useful maxim into greater circulation, But what I require of all who would truly enjoy social pleasure, are clear and perspicuous ideas of innumerable objects relating to man, his nature, his destination, his affairs, his most important concerns. He who is destitute of these parts of knowledge, who is completely ignorant; who at least brings not into company an inquisitive mind susceptible of information; who can absolutely understand and discourse of nothing except subjects that are so trite and so worn out, that scarcely anybody else can hear them and think of them without irksomeness and disgust; who from pure ignorance is indifferent to every subject in which mankind should be most interested: how soon must he feel tired and occasion lassitude in others! How completely idle and disengaged is he,



he, when his ſenſes are no longer occupied! How totally incapable is he of that noble ſatisfaction which the mutual and familiar communication of their ſentiments their obſervations and remarks, their experiences and opinions, procure to the intelligent and attentive! Wit, intelligence, ſagacity, ſcience, art, all is loſt upon him; and how great his loſs! What pleaſures of ſenſe alone, or amuſements can compenſate it to him? — A variety of virtues, my pious hearers, are no leſs eſſentially requiſite to the enjoyment of the nobler pleaſures of ſociety, and he who does not bring the former with him, vainly flatters himſelf with the latter. Inordinate, violent paſſions: what enemies, what deſtroyers of ſocial pleaſures! Their breath is poiſon to them all, and they are very often inſtantaneouſly blaſted and killed by their looks. And under how many deceitful forms, under how many fallacious diſguiſes do theſe monſters find means to ſteal into ſociety and fill it with deſolation and miſery? How can the free and eaſy enjoyment of pleaſure exiſt where envy and jealouſy regard every excellent quality of another with an evil eye, where conceitedneſs and vanity are attentive only to themſelves and their own perſonal diſtinctions, where the revengeful man is ſeeking to injure and to ruin his brother, where malice or calumny is lying in wait to catch any word, any geſture, any action that may render innocence ſuſpected, or confirm the ſuſpicion already raiſed! Eſtranged from all free and eaſy enjoyment of pleaſure muſt that ſociety

ciety be, into which ſuch hateful paſſions have found admiſſion. — The mere abſence of theſe vices however will not render mankind capable of enjoying the nobler kinds of pleaſure in ſociety. Likewiſe the inattentive, the frigid, the inſenſible, the indifferent are excluded from it. Whoever comes not with ſincere benevolence into the company of his brethren; whoever does not obſerve with complacency and ſatisfaction, whatever of beautiful and good they have and do and enjoy; whoever does not rejoice in their intellectual and corporeal excellencies as well as in his own; whoever does not perceive and feel in all this the inexhauſtible goodneſs of God and the worth and the dignity of man: to him the generality, the pureſt ſources of ſocial pleaſure will be inacceſſible. And how ſoon will they fail to him, who brings not with him for ſocial converſe, a liberal mind and an open heart; who retains the gloomy ideas and cares of intricate tranſactions or untoward incidents; who is cold and reſerved, neither opening himſelf to others nor taking much intereſt in what is and happens around him. No, my dear friends, in order that the company of our brethren and converſe with them may procure us pleaſure of a refined and elevated ſpecies: good, virtuous ſentiments and affections muſt accompany us to them, and actuate our conduct among them. We muſt eſteem every man as ſuch without regard to his rank and ſtation; his looks and his preſence muſt

muſt never be odious to us; his ſhining qualities muſt never be offenſive, but always reſpectable to us. Nothing of all that relates to man ſhould be foreign and indifferent to us; we ſhould take part in his ſorrows as well as in his joys; neither be aſhamed of his natural weakneſſes and defects nor our own, frequently put ourſelves in his place, in his circumſtances, and always judge and treat him, juſt as we ourſelves in that ſituation and thoſe circumſtances would wiſh to be judged and treated. We ſhould in a manner forget ourſelves and live ſolely in others and for others; and inſtead of diſplaying our excellencies or our pretenſions to their diſadvantage, we ſhould in whatever we ſay and propoſe and do, have nothing in view but the general entertainment and the ſatisfaction of all. The more we promote this aim, the more ſatisfaction and pleaſure ſhall we ourſelves enjoy.

Another reaſon of the failure of ſocial happineſs is this: we expect too much, or even incompatible things from ſocial life. We expect too much, if we promiſe ourſelves from it uninterrupted pleaſure, or entirely pure and free from all defects and imperfections. In ſo doing we forget that man is by nature a limited, frail and defective being, and that we live and enjoy our life among creatures juſt as limited, juſt as infirm and frail as ourſelves. We forget, that almoſt every ſocial pleaſure muſt be purchaſed by ſome, greater or ſmaller, ſacrifice, and entirely pure and unmingled ſatisfaction is not the lot

lot of mortals. Thus we expect too much from ſocial life, when we make ourſelves the central point of all beſides, or ſet up our preſent humour as the ſtandard, by which the worth of every pleaſure is to be calculated, and by which all others are to regulate their ſocial occupations or amuſements, divert themſelves or not, in one manner or another. How can that be called ſocial pleaſure, generally communicated and generally enjoyed, if all aſſemble only for the ſake of one, and muſt abſolutely move and act according to his diſpoſition, and ſimply for his gratification? What a contradiction, to require ſocial pleaſure, without ſociability, or, to enjoy alone in common with others! Yes, but too frequently we expect in this regard downright contradictory effects from ſocial life; and how can it otherwiſe be, than that we are cheated in our expectations! One will merely receive, be entertained and amuſed, but give nothing for it in return, contribute nothing to the entertainment and diverſion of the reſt; will merely learn, or collect information, but communicate neither his perceptions nor his experiences to the company. Another will only teach, only give and impart from his abundance, play the part of a rich man among the poor, or of a maſter among his ſcholars, engroſs the whole of the converſation, or arbitrarily dictate the tone of it, or if he have conſequence or audacity enough, impoſe a reſtraint on every mind and every heart. Are not theſe contradictory requiſitions, abſurd expectations? Can ſo-

cial pleaſure exiſt without a mutual exchange of the knowledge and abilities of each, or of the beautiful and good which he poſſeſſes in an eminent degree? Does it not eſſentially conſiſt in reciprocally giving and receiving, teaching and learning? And can we form any conception of it without perfect eaſe and a rational uſe of one's natural liberty?

Laſtly, my pious hearers, we allow prejudice and faſhion to deprive us of the true and proper enjoyment of ſocial life, and this too is one of the principal reaſons of our complaining with ſo much juſtice of the ſcarcity of this pleaſure. On what part of our happineſs do not prejudice and faſhion ſpread their baleful influence? What ſources of it do they not poiſon? And how tyrannically do they reign over ſocial pleaſure! In company it is a rare thing for men to judge from their own perceptions and feelings of what is agreeable or diſagreeable, proper or improper. They generally, in oppoſition to their own ſentiments, agree in opinion with thoſe who in virtue of their ſtation, their rank, their opulence, or of ſome accident or other, take upon them to preſcribe the rules of faſhion. They abjure their own ideas of taſte, that they may be thought people of taſte by others. In the choice of their amuſements or in the enjoyment of them they ſeldom conſult their real wants, or the preſent frame of heart and mind. But what is polite, what are called poliſhed manners, what has in its favour the example and the practice of perſons in high life, decides on both

both with the force of faſcination. Only that pleaſure is held to be real, covetable pleaſure which is marked with the authoritative ſtamp of faſhion. One would frequently be tempted to think, that mankind were not ſo intent on the purſuit of pleaſure as upon the reputation of having enjoyed a great deal of pleaſure, and of being abundantly provided with the means of it. And who can be blind to the manifold conſtraint, who feels not himſelf at times the conſtraint, we thus put upon ourſelves? This being the caſe, how can we reſign ourſelves with eaſe and careleſſneſs to our natural ſenſations? How ſeldom appear and communicate ourſelves to others as we really are! What ſolicitous attention muſt we generally exert to all our judgments, words, geſtures, to our moſt trifling actions! How ſeldom are the tempers and ſentiments of the company in ſuch perfect uniſon, that they have no need to conceal or diſguiſe their opinions from each other! And how often is the enjoyment of ſocial entertainment incumbered or embittered by the laborious and expenſive preparations that are made for it in purſuance of the orders of faſhion! How much oftener, how much more purely and completely might we enjoy theſe pleaſures if they required no great trouble or expenſe, no extraordinary preparation, but their whole worth was determined by ſincere goodwill and cordial friendſhip!

However well-founded therefore the complaints of the want of ſocial pleaſure and happineſs may be,

it is no leſs manifeſt that the cauſes of them lie within us, and that properly we have none but ourſelves to accuſe on that account. Would you then remedy theſe complaints, my pious hearers, would ye enjoy more ſocial ſatisfaction; would ye enjoy it more pure and complete: avoid the errors which have hitherto deprived you of it. Set in earneſt about acquiring thoſe qualities of mind and heart, which may render you capable of it. Cultivate your underſtanding with care; exerciſe yourſelves in reflecting on whatever ye ſee and hear, and thus collect a ſtore of knowledge, various, uſeful and entertaining, which ye may exchange with your brethren againſt theirs. Never make your appearance in their company without being accompanied and animated by all the ſocial virtues. Shut up the avenues to your heart againſt thoſe inimical paſſions which diſturb the peace and kill the pleaſure of ſociety, againſt envy, jealouſy, pride and vanity. Learn to eſteem and honour your fellow creatures as men, without regard to outward diſtinctions; learn ſincerely to rejoice in whatever is beautiful and good, let who will be the poſſeſſor and the doer of it; learn to turn your attention more on what is good and excellent, than on what is bad and defective in your companions. Let benevolence and humanity be the ſoul of all your diſcourſes and actions, the rule of your judgments, the ſtandard of your pretenſions. Take a real intereſt in all the concerns of others. Rejoice with the joyful, weep with the mourner; never

ver be abſent and reſerved, expand your heart to every ſenſation of humanity and generous affection, and likewiſe impart your ſentiments without anxious reſervation to others. — Never expect from men and among mankind perfectly pure and unmingled pleaſure; expect from no one more than according to his capacities, in his circumſtances and in his ſituation he is able to afford, and if you yourſelf ſtand in need of indulgence and candour, let others experience the ſame. Never require only to receive, without giving anything in return; never pretend to be the principal perſonage of the company, or to perform the capital part in it; never uſurp excluſively to yourſelf all the means of entertainment and pleaſure. Receive and give, learn and teach alternately, and do and enjoy all things in common. — At the ſame time, try and eſtimate the value of things, not by the reigning prejudices, but by juſt perceptions. In the ſelection and enjoyment of your pleaſures be not ſwayed by the laws of a fickle and often tyrannical faſhion, but by the laws of ſound ſenſe, and your own experience. Seek rather to be contented and pleaſed than to appear ſo. Be not aſhamed of preferring the care for the health of your mind and your body to every other care, and even of ſacrificing to it the reputation for good breeding and poliſhed manners. And if it ſo happen that you muſt after all comply with the prevailing cuſtoms and manners, never do it ſo blindly and unconditionally, as to become a ſlave to them. Maintain your

native liberty with prudent moderation, and never moleſt others in the uſe of theirs. If ye follow theſe precepts of wiſdom and virtue, my pious hearers, certainly many, nay moſt of the complaints of the deficiency in ſocial pleaſure will be remedied, and ye will draw real happineſs from this ſource alſo.

SERMON LII.

Cauſes of the Deficiency in Domeſtic Pleaſure and Domeſtic Happineſs.

GOD, thou haſt cauſed us all to proceed from one blood; we compoſe but one family, whoſe father and provider thou art. What obligations to mutual eſteem and affection ariſe from this alliance! And what ſources of ſocial pleaſure and of ſocial happineſs are opened to us by it! May we fulfil theſe duties with ever increaſing fidelity and care, and thereby render ourſelves capable of enjoying in continually greater purity and perfection this pleaſure and this happineſs! Do thou teach us thyſelf, o compaſſionate father, ever better to underſtand thy deſigns upon us, our neceſſities and our deſtination, and to ſeek our happineſs where, according to thy paternal will, we ought to ſeek, and certainly ſhall find it. Teach us always more rightly to chuſe between the various pleaſures that offer themſelves to us, and preſerve us from the illuſions of ſenſuality and prejudice. Let our taſte for whatever is beautiful and good be continually more purified and refined by the light of truth, ſo that we may never quit the ſafe path of nature and

innocence. Let wiſdom and virtue and real piety be our inſeparable companions and guides on the journey of life; let their precepts, their admonitions, their declarations be ever ſacred to us, and our approximation to that perfection, to which they are adapted to conduct us, our weightieſt concern. Beſtow thy gracious heavenly benediction in this reſpect alſo on the conſiderations we are now entering upon. Let us inwardly digeſt their truth, have a powerful ſenſe of their importance, and become better and happier by them. For theſe things we implore thee, the author and diſpenſer of every good and perfect gift, with filial confidence as becomes the votaries of Jeſus, and conclude our petitions in the form which he preſcribed: Our father, &c.

PROV. iii. 21.

Let not them depart from thine eyes: keep ſound wiſdom and diſcretion.

DOMESTIC life is of all the ſources of human pleaſure and human happineſs the moſt copious and abundant; and yet it is that ſource perhaps, which, at leaſt in the middling and higher claſſes is the ſeldomeſt and moſt ſparingly drawn from. It is conſtantly open to mankind; the uſe of it is confined to no particular time; neither toilſome preparatives nor previous expenditure are neceſſary to the enjoyment of it. The more pleaſure the wiſe man draws from this ſource, the more copious and over-

overflowing it is; the oftener he uſes it, the more agreeable it becomes to his taſte. Its enjoyment is not followed either by ſatiety or diſguſt, and though it ſeldom procures us tranſporting delights, yet it is never deficient in mild, innocent, and therefore more durable ſatisfactions. Adverſe events may doubtleſs diſturb and extenuate this ſource of pleaſure, but never can it entirely fail unleſs by our own miſconduct. All circumſtances, however great or ſmall, however important or unimportant, whether they ſignify much or little in the eyes of the world, all ſupport and nouriſh it, all contribute to ſwell its ſtreams, all enhance and ſweeten their flavour. It accompanies and refreſhes us in every condition, in every ſituation, in every ſcene and every period of life. It alone compenſates the want of very many other ſources of happineſs, and without it the enjoyment of all would ſoon grow inſipid, or at leaſt loſe much of its value. Certain however as all this is, my pious hearers, it is no leſs ſo, that comparatively but few derive ſo much pleaſure and happineſs from this ſource as they might. But too frequently is domeſtic life converted into a no leſs fertile ſource of trouble and miſery. And though it ſhould not proceed to this extremity, yet all real pleaſure is baniſhed from it by ſatiety, languor, coolneſs and averſion. Accordingly complaints of a deficiency in domeſtic pleaſure are both common and various. Indeed we conceal and ſuppreſs as much as poſſible theſe complaints, becauſe they almoſt

moſt always imply defects and failings of which we ought to be aſhamed. But the diſeaſe is not thereby remedied; it only becomes the more inveterate and is at laſt incurable. It is unqueſtionably far better to inveſtigate the grounds and cauſes of it, and to conſider of the proper means to remove it. And this we will now do, my dear friends. We will inquire into the principal cauſes which occaſion that defect of domeſtic pleaſure and domeſtic happineſs whereof ſo many complain.

The principal cauſes of this defect lie in ſeveral other defects: in the defect of mutual eſteem and affection; in the defect of a certain degree of participation; in the defect of a taſte for ſimple and innocent pleaſures; in the defect of reſources of entertainment and of enjoyment; laſtly in the defect of neceſſary quiet and retirement. Five ſpecies of defects, which muſt all more or leſs be attended with a defect in domeſtic pleaſure and domeſtic happineſs.

Defect of mutual eſteem and affection is therefore the firſt and certainly one of the leading cauſes of the defect in domeſtic pleaſure and domeſtic happineſs. Would I court the ſociety and the converſe, could I be briſk and gay in the ſociety and converſe of one of whom I entertain an ill opinion, to whom I aſcribe no good qualities, no honeſt ſentiments, no merits in regard to myſelf or others, whom I think incapable of teaching me anything, of helping and aſſiſting me in anything, or of contributing any thing

thing to my happineſs? And how frequently is not this the caſe between relatives and members of families! How frequently is it not ſordid intereſt or blind paſſion that knits the moſt ſacred and indiſſoluble of all ties! And when once the charm of the purchaſed or inveigled prize has loſt its novelty, when paſſion gives way to calm reflection, how ſoon muſt that connection be weakened or diſſolved which was only cemented by lucre or paſſion! This groſs deception however out of the caſe, how frequently do we build our domeſtic happineſs on expectations that are contrary both to the nature of man and of things! We expect from human beings ſuperhuman perfection: capacities without limitation, virtues without a flaw, light without ſhade. We expect pleaſure without any trouble, joy without any appendage of ſorrow and care. Is the expectation, as it cannot be otherwiſe, unfulfilled; we imagine ourſelves deceived, defrauded: overlook all the beautiful and good that really exiſts in the object of our diſappointment; eſteem it not according to its intrinſic worth, but according to the extravagant, fantaſtical image which we had previouſly formed of it; enumerate all the real and imaginary blemiſhes of it with the utmoſt accuracy, and complain of unmerited misfortune. How can mutual eſteem and affection be there, and how without it domeſtic happineſs be enjoyed! Conſequences not leſs pernicious frequently attend on imprudence. We ſhould be led almoſt to imagine that domeſtic life, that

that the nuptial tie exempts us from the obligation of obſerving the rules of propriety and decorum. We therefore entirely ceaſe from keeping a guard over ourſelves and preſerving a clear conſciouſneſs of our actions, reſign ourſelves without reſerve to our natural or aſſumed infirmities and failings, make no ſcruple of ſhewing ourſelves in an unfavourable or diſguſting light, abuſe the rights of familiarity and frankneſs even to inſult, and are apt to perſuade ourſelves, that perſons, who are ſo intimately connected together, have no need of reciprocal indulgence and candour. How very much however, by ſuch imprudent behaviour, muſt eſteem and affection, thoſe two main columns of domeſtic happineſs, be ſhaken! How much more frequently muſt this ſort of conduct alienate the hearts of thoſe who are guilty of it, than unite them more completely together! How much oftener diſturb and embitter their union and their intercourſe, than alleviate and ſweeten it! No, my pious hearers, would ye enjoy domeſtic happineſs, raiſe it on the ſolid baſis of tenderneſs and eſteem. Never expect more of one another, than either party, according to your ſeveral capacities, endowments, education, circumſtances and ſituation is able to afford. Expect not from one another faultleſs, perfect and uninterrupted ſatisfaction, but always a variety of imperfections and frailties, a variety of troubles and uneaſineſs. Accuſtom yourſelves therefore to remark rather the good and excellent, than the bad and defective, that either

either of you poſſeſſes, and be as careful to hold up to the light and to rejoice in the former, as to excuſe and conceal the latter. Shew either to other the greater tenderneſs and indulgence, the greater opportunity and means you have of more clearly perceiving the proximate and remoter occaſions of your mutual infirmities and failings. At the ſame time never, never loſe ſight yourſelf, of what is proper and decorous; let reciprocally the other perceive as little as poſſible your failings and defects; let neither be indifferent to the judgment and approbation of the other, but each of you take pains to convey to the other, by the uſe of all legitimate and allowable means, a good opinion of yourſelf, or to confirm it if already entertained. Thus alone can you be animated by mutual eſteem and tenderneſs, and when you are animated by them, what ſources of domeſtic pleaſure will they not open to you! Where will it be poſſible for you to ſeek and find greater ſatisfaction and felicity, than where you may ſafely reckon upon mutual tenderneſs and eſteem?

Want of mutual participation is another cauſe of a deficiency in domeſtic pleaſure and domeſtic happineſs. Living and converſing with perſons to whoſe concerns, occupations, undertakings, views and expectations, to whoſe ſorrows and ſatisfactions we are totally indifferent: how ſoon muſt the ſource of entertainment and pleaſure fail! How inſipid muſt be the intercourſe, how dull the converſations, where each purſues his own meditations, broods

broods over his own cares and troubles, entertains himſelf with abſent perſons and objects, or ruminates on the execution of his private ſchemes! What a painful conſtraint, what an unnatural ſituation, to have ſo many important concerns in common, and yet not view, conſider, regulate, provide for and tranſact them together! No, without the moſt diverſified and ſincere participation in whatever relates to perſons ſo cloſely united, no domeſtic pleaſure, no domeſtic happineſs is poſſible. The more concerns they have in common; the more intimately and inſeparably their welfare is bound together; the leſs one can be eaſy and contented without the other: ſo much the leſs ſhould anything that they propoſe and do be foreign and indifferent to them. It is not however my meaning, that one ſhould interfere in the buſineſs of the other, that one ſhould trouble the other with formal directions about affairs, without competent knowledge, or that one ought to deliver an account of them to the other as to his judge and ſuperior. But if they would be bleſſed with union and affection, in how many other matters may and ſhould they not take a warm and lively intereſt! How much eaſier is that grief to be borne, which a man ſhares with the friend of his heart! How much more charming is every pleaſant proſpect, on which we can expatiate in common with one who takes an equal intereſt in it! How much ſweeter does that ſatisfaction taſte, which we enjoy in common with him!

him! And when is an opportunity wanting for giving encouragement, conſolation, advice, relief to each other, and thus alleviating the troubles and hardſhips of life? How much more juſtly in general do we judge of objects, when we conſider them in company with ſome other perſon, whom we have no need to diſtruſt, on whoſe candour and eſteem we may ſafely rely, even in our failings and miſtakes. — — Would ye therefore enjoy domeſtic pleaſure, domeſtic happineſs, my pious hearers; be not ſullen and reſerved towards each other. Communicate together your ſentiments, your feelings, your intentions, your ſolicitudes, your ſufferings and ſatisfactions in amicable confidence. Nothing that concerns the other, trifling and inſignificant as it may be or appear, ſhould be ſtrange or indifferent to you. The more, as far as the nature of the caſe and your mutual ſtrength or weakneſs admit, the more ye reciprocally bear and forbear, in common do and enjoy, the lighter that burden will be to you, the more agreeable this pleaſure. With united powers we can bear a great deal without ſinking beneath it, and of the good that we enjoy in common we ſhall not eaſily be cloyed.

Want of taſte for innocent and ſimple pleaſures is a third cauſe of the failure of domeſtic pleaſure and domeſtic happineſs. The pleaſures of domeſtic life are indeed not riotous, not ſtupefying; they tranſport us not into a new and ſtrange world; they are not attended, like many of the ſocial pleaſures, with

with a total forgetfulneſs of ourſelves, of the relations in which we are placed, and of our condition: they are mild and retired; they imply a clear conſciouſneſs of our connections and rational reflection upon them; they are confined to a narrow circle of perſons and things, and are then moſt harmleſs and delicious when we quit them the leaſt. But ſuch pleaſures are not to the taſte of every one. Pleaſure and diſtraction, ſtupefaction, oblivion of oneſelf are, in the opinion of too many, ſynonymous terms. They ſeek the former there alone, where they hope to find the latter. Domeſtic life therefore has but little charms for them. What they ſee and hear in that ſociety ſeems too uniform, too dull, and has too few attractions for their faſtidious minds and their depraved taſte. They have no deſire to live at home and to themſelves, but to be and think and live in the obſervation and opinion of others. The ſphere of entertainment and ſatisfaction aſſigned them by nature, is too narrow for them; they conceive theſe ſalutary reſtrictions to be grievous bonds, and go to look for greater liberty or licentiouſneſs in the arms of real bondage and ſlavery; they ruſh into what is ſtyled the great world, in queſt of what they might far more ſurely and completely find in the little circle of their family. And in ſo doing how much they loſe! How numerous, how pure, how ſatisfying are the ſimple, innocent pleaſures of domeſtic life! Every ſound opinion, every proper expreſſion, every generous ſentiment, every virtu-

ous emotion, that is there uttered; every juſt and laudable action, which is the topic of diſcourſe; every inſtance of eſteem and approbation, every encouragement to good, every word of conſolation in ſuffering that is there adminiſtered; every friendly and familiar converſation that is there carried on; every mutual expanſion and exundation of the heart: how delightful to the uncorrupted taſte! And then, my pious hearers, the equal participation in training the young ſuſceptible ſouls to wiſdom and virtue, to be uſeful citizens and rational chriſtians; the care to ſow none but good ſeeds in their hearts; the view of every opening bloſſom of their intellect and their good diſpoſitions; the obſervation of every progreſſive ſtep they make on the path chalked out to them; the proſpect of their future worth and uſefulneſs: what ſources of the moſt refined domeſtic pleaſure muſt this open to thoſe who know how to prize it according to its value! How greatly ſuperior are the ſatisfactions of this nature to all the far-famed pleaſures of the faſhionable world! How much more ſubſtantial, how much more pure, how much more ſatisfying both in the enjoyment and in the recollection are thoſe than theſe! And how much nearer they lie to us! How much more freely and fully may we enjoy them! How much more food, how much ſounder nouriſhment do they yield to the mind and the heart! — Would ye therefore enjoy domeſtic pleaſure and domeſtic happineſs, my pious hearers; correct and refine your taſte. Learn

to prefer the natural to the artificial, the ſimple to the complicated; learn to prefer reality to appearance; to prefer your own to borrowed riches. In the choice of your pleaſures have greater regard to the wants of your nature and to your proper deſtination, than to the reputation in which they are held. Remark the decided influence which theſe or the other pleaſures have upon your health, on the peace and ſatisfaction of your mind, and judge of their worth accordingly. Your principal maxim herein ſhould be this: the more innocent, the more natural and ſimple any pleaſure is, the more durable and honourable will it be.

Defect of reſources or means of entertainment and of enjoyment is a fourth cauſe of a deficiency in domeſtic pleaſure and domeſtic happineſs. To the furniſhing of entertainment, and particularly of entertainment in a contracted circle, a variety of materials is requiſite to prevent the ſource of it from ſpeedily drying up and giving place to dullneſs and inſipidity, and the enjoyment ſhould be diverſified by liberal and refined ſentiments, to prevent its proceeding to ſatiety or degenerating into languor. He who brings with him into domeſtic life an empty head and a cold heart; he who can abſolutely find no entertainment in any but the moſt trivial ſubjects, and can only be moved or agitated by ſtrong ſenſible impreſſions: ſhould not indeed promiſe himſelf much pleaſure, much happineſs from this mode of life. He is deficient in the principal reſources

ſources for both the one and the other. The mere pleaſures of ſenſe are preſently exhauſted, as well as the trifling occurrences and events of the day. But when perſons thus nearly allied bring into the union a reflecting mind and a well regulated heart; when they have a decided taſte for whatever is true and beautiful and good; when they poſſeſs the inclination and the capacity for inſtructing and being inſtructed; when the reading of a good inſtructive book together ſupplies the place of faſhionable viſits; when they take a hearty intereſt in whatever concerns mankind and the events of their lives; when they ſtrive with combined forces after ſuperior attainments in wiſdom and virtue; after farther progreſs in moral perfection; when in ſhort they hold religion for their moſt important concern, and together enjoy the ſatisfactions of an enlightened piety and a rational devotion: will they, can they ever be wanting in abundant, inexhauſtible ſources of pleaſure and happineſs? Would ye therefore partake in this pleaſure and this happineſs, my devout auditors, ſtudy to underſtand and to uſe thoſe ſources. Study to acquire thoſe qualities of mind and heart which will render you ſuſceptible of that pleaſure, and the enjoyment of it. Study to know yourſelf and the true end of your creation, and to prize and revere whatever may conduce to the attainment of it. Learn to hold wiſdom and virtue for what they are, and rejoice more in every ſtep you advance towards human and chriſtian perfection than

in the moſt ſhining accompliſhments and the moſt ſplendid gifts of fortune. Let religion be your conſtant companion, and the ſentiment of God and futurity the ſoul of your harmleſs pleaſures. So will they moſt aſſuredly have variety, novelty and attractions enough for you, and ſatiety and languor will be totally unknown to you.

To conclude, my devout audience, the want of neceſſary quiet and retirement is likewiſe a cauſe of the failure of domeſtic pleaſure and domeſtic happineſs. He who is driven to and fro at the mercy of any inordinate paſſion, be it avarice, or ambition, or vanity, or envy and jealouſy; he who is tied to his work and his affairs with anxious ſolicitude, and allows theſe cares to attend and perſecute him everywhere; he who thinks and acts not upon ſound principles, but as chance, caprice and humour direct, lives in perpetual contradiction with himſelf, never rightly knows what he would or would not, and is almoſt always diſſatisfied with himſelf, and with the world around him: that man is not capable of domeſtic pleaſure and domeſtic happineſs. His temper would rather poiſon every pleaſure and deſtroy every kind of happineſs. Such a wretched being as this may run from one ſcene of revelry to another, from one ſtupefactive amuſement to another, in queſt of that tranquillity which everywhere eludes his ſearch, becauſe he ſeeks it not there where it is only to be found. Would ye find this precious reſt, and with it the capacity for domeſtic

meſtic pleaſure and domeſtic happineſs; ſeek it in your heart. Impoſe ſilence on your clamorous luſts and affections. Break the fetters in which vile paſſions keep you bound. Direct all your appetites to the ends for which they were implanted. Work with unabating diligence at the correction of your temper and the amendment of your life. Study to acquire a taſte for calm exerciſes of meditation and prayer. Study conſtantly to think and act in ſuch a manner that you may be ſatisfied with God, with yourſelf and with all your fellow-creatures, and need neither bluſh for the preſent, nor anxiouſly dread the future. Never entirely loſe ſight of yourſelf and the relations in which you are placed; avoid carefully whatever may drown reflection or diſturb your inward compoſure; and then come with a liberal mind and a tranquil heart into the circle of your family and friends, where you will infallibly not ſeek for pleaſure and happineſs in vain.

SERMON LIII.

Prudential Rules to be obſerved in judging of the Happineſs of other Perſons.

GOD, thou doeſt good to all, and thy mercy is over all thy works. Happineſs is the end to which thou haſt created and deſtined all, and never canſt thou, the Omnipotent and Omniſcient, fail of thy purpoſe. But happineſs the moſt diverſified in kind, the moſt various in degree is the mark and the prize which thou haſt ſet before us. Every ſtage of our exiſtence determines our temporary capacity and our behaviour its nature and its magnitude. One thou conducteſt ſooner, another later, one along a ſmooth and eaſy way, another by toilſome, thorny paths, one already in the preſent, another not until the future life, to the enjoyment of it. At preſent we judge concerning the means whereby thou attaineſt thy deſign, as ſhort-ſighted ignorant mortals, judge often falſely of them, do not always perceive the juſtice and benignity of thy wiſe œconomy on earth, and many times lament and complain, where there is no actual reaſon for it. Forgive us, thy frail, thy feeble children, and teach us with ever greater impartiality to view and to judge of

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our condition and that of our brethren, to conſider the true end and deſtination both of them and us continually more in their whole extent, and thus continually open to us new ſources of ſatisfaction and of gratitude towards thee, the ever-flowing fountain of benignity and love. Bleſs in this view the contemplations we are now to commence. Let them be inſtrumental in thy holy hand to extend our perceptions, to correct our judgments, to ſhew us the inſtitutions and ordinances which thou haſt eſtabliſhed among mankind in an adorable light, and furniſh us with new arguments for content and acquieſcence. As the votaries of thy beloved Jeſus we put up theſe our prayers to thee in childlike boldneſs, and invoke thee further in his ſacred name. Our father, &c.

PSALM CXLV. 16.

Thou openeſt thine hand, and ſatisfieſt the deſire of every living thing.

PROPERLY to eſtimate and determine of the happineſs of our fellow-creatures, is of greater conſequence than we are apt to imagine, my devout audience. How otherwiſe could we entertain ſuch ſentiments and behave in ſuch a manner towards God, the ſovereign ruler of the world, and towards mankind, our brethren, as truth and our duty require? Does not the judgment that we paſs on the ordinances and inſtitutions of God, on his over-ruling

providence and the adminiſtration of his government in human affairs greatly depend on the right or wrong eſtimates we form of human happineſs? Do not the eſteem and affection, or the coolneſs and contempt with which we regard and treat others, in a great meaſure depend on it; does not the complacency or the diſſatisfaction with which we live and walk among them and converſe with them, depend upon it? This due eſtimation of human happineſs is indeed attended with great difficulties. Appearances are here extremely fallacious. Happineſs is an affair of ſentiment. It reſides and is ſeen more in domeſtic than in ſocial life, more in ſtillneſs and retirement, than in the tumult of company and in the face of the world. It is at the ſame time ſeen in a great diverſity of ways; it preſents itſelf in a vaſt variety of forms; it is as different as the conſtitution, the temper, the education, the culture, the habits of life, the connections of mankind. Its magnitude is not abſolutely fixed and determined, and cannot in all men be meaſured by one and the ſame ſtandard. It is always analogous to the particular cirumſtances, ſituations, capacities, affections, wants, habits of the individual. We may however preſerve ourſelves from many prevailing errors and prejudices in this reſpect, and learn in general to judge more juſtly on this head, by exerciſing ourſelves in reflection upon it. This we will now do, my devout hearers. We will namely employ ourſelves in the contemplation of a few prudential rules

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to be obſerved in judging of the happineſs of others. This contemplation will at once illuſtrate the declaration of the pſalmiſt in our text: God, thou openeſt thine hand, and ſatisfieſt the deſire of every living thing, and ſupply us with convincing arguments of the fact.

Wouldſt thou then, my chriſtian brother, properly eſtimate and judge of the happineſs of others; meaſure not the wants of thy brother by thine own. Every ſtation, every claſs, every generation, every age of man, every individual has its peculiar wants. The countryman and the townſman; the youth and the hoary head; the rich and the poor; the learned and the unlearned; he who is brought up in the lap of eaſe and luxury, and he who is hardened by labour and toil; the man refined by arts and ſciences, and the rude uncultivated child of nature: how great the difference that in this reſpect ſubſiſts between them! How various their wants! How numberleſs and inſatiable with the one; how confined and eaſily ſupplied with the others! Thou haſt perhaps a thouſand wants in regard to thy body, to thy mind, to thy dwelling, thy dreſs, the whole of thy external condition, which millions of perſons know nothing of, of which they have never once heard, the gratification whereof they therefore neither ſeek nor deſire; and wants which we know not, feel not, by which we are not preſſed, are in fact not wants. They may it is true be deſirable goods, real advantages; but ſo long as they are not held to be ſuch and not required

required by ſome one, the abſence of them cannot produce miſery in him. He may be as happy, perhaps happier, more contented and pleaſed, than thou art. The fewer wants he has, and the more ſimple and natural they are, the more eaſily and ſurely he can ſupply them: as on the other hand thy cares, thy troubles, thy defects, thy diſappointments, are increaſed in proportion as thy wants increaſe. Claſs therefore no one among the number of the unhappy, pity therefore no one as miſerable, becauſe he is not lodged, not fed, not apparelled, not waited upon, as thou art; becauſe he poſſeſſes not and knows not a thouſand things, which by thee are deemed neceſſary ingredients of propriety and convenience, without which, in thy opinion, thou couldſt not live, at leaſt not live contented and pleaſed. Probably this defect may be compenſated to him by many more eſſential benefits; probably theſe very deficiencies may be the foundation of his happineſs, of his health and vigour, of his buſy and unſolicitous life, free from the languor of idleneſs, free from the ſatiety which follows eaſe and indulgence, and the diſguſt that waits on the ſickly appetite.

Wouldſt thou farther, my chriſtian friend, properly eſtimate and judge of the happineſs of others; beware of poizing the troubles and burdens which they bear, the afflictions which befall them, the wants which they feel, againſt the weight with which ſimilar evils oppreſs or would oppreſs thee. The troubles and burdens, under which thou perhaps wouldſt

wouldſt be cruſhed, are borne by a thouſand others with erected heads and undaunted ſpirits, are perhaps not troubles and burdens at all to them. Thoſe afflictions which perhaps would deprive thee of every pleaſure and comfort of life, which would render thee impatient and diſconſolate, thouſands of thy brethren would endure without murmur and complaint, nor be prevented by them from the blithe enjoyment of life; becauſe they meaſure them by a different ſtandard, and experience them in a different ſituation, among different people, in different circumſtances, relations and habitudes. The want of this or that diſtinction, ſome augmentation to thy fortune, which would perhaps completely overpower thee and plunge thee in deſpondence, is to a numerous claſs of thy fellow-beings no real want, or habit has reconciled them to it, and deprived it of every thing oppreſſive or diſgraceful in their eyes. Judge not likewiſe then in this reſpect too haſtily from thyſelf concerning others. Conceive of their happineſs or their miſery not from the particular troubles and burdens, from the peculiar ſufferings and wants, to which they are ſubject. Compare the whole of their condition with thine, ſet their powers againſt thine, and neglect not to take into the account their education, their manner of life, their habits, their way of thinking and feeling, their relations towards extrinſic objects and particularly towards the ſociety to which they belong. This will ſave thee many idle complaints, many anxious ſighs, much unreaſonable

able compaſſion, perhaps ſeveral doubts and perplexities in regard to the methods of divine providence, and enable thee to live and to converſe with mankind, thy brethren, with greater ſatisfaction.

A third cautionary rule in judging of the happineſs of other perſons is this: make not thy ſenſibility and thy taſte the ſtandard of theirs. Think not that they are equally affected, equally rejoiced or diſtreſſed at whatever befalls them, with thee. Nor that they all have the ſame ſenſe for the beautiful and good, or for the contrary, as thou haſt. No, all objects, good or evil, agreeable or diſagreeable, make not the ſame impreſſions on all mankind as they make on thee, neither are they ſo rapid, nor ſo ſtrong, nor ſo laſting with one as with another. If with one they do no more than glide as it were over the ſurface of his body or his mind, yet they deeply affect and wound another. If they ſcarcely excite the attention of one, another will be raviſhed and tranſported by them. If they accompany one at all times and perſecute him without intermiſſion, with another they quickly paſs away and leave not a trace behind. Here much depends on the natural texture of the organs of ſenſe, on the ſuperior or inferior cultivation of the mind and taſte, and the method that has been purſued in ſo doing, on the intercourſe with perſons of this or the other organization and temper, on habit and mode of life, and the like. As various as theſe ſeveral qualities are among mankind: ſo various is the degree of their ſenſibility, and therefore likewiſe

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of the influence which it has on their happineſs or their miſery. Never therefore canſt thou, my chriſtian brother, from the effects which certain agreeable or diſagreeable accidents have upon thee; draw any ſafe inferences concerning the effects which they produce in others. — Thou, for example, art extremely ſenſible to every change of weather, to the ſeveral viciſſitudes of heat and cold: while a thouſand others feel nothing of all theſe alterations and viciſſitudes, or at leaſt have no diſagreeable and no injurious feeling of them. — — Probably thou art alarmed at every trifling ſenſation of pain, terrified and confounded at every attack of diſeaſe: whereas he who is leſs tender and delicate, can bear acuter pains without perturbation, and ſuſtain a dangerous malady without violent agitation or alarm. Perhaps thou art offended at any little breach of order or harmony which thy ſharpſighted eye, thy practiſed ear, thy delicate taſte perceives, and this leſſens and diſturbs many ſenſual and intellectual pleaſures, which otherwiſe thou couldſt enjoy, and which he who has leſs delicate organs of ſenſe, or a leſs irritable palate, or a leſs faſtidious taſte, thoroughly and completely enjoys. — Thou art perhaps ſtartled at every doubt that ariſes on matters of religion. In thy mind it may ſometimes deprive the moſt important, moſt conſoling truth of all its energy, and occaſion thee to complain of the lamentable lot of mankind, in having ſo little light and certainty. But this complaint relates only to thyſelf and thoſe of thy ſtamp, not to the majority

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or the generality of thy brethren. The great bulk of them find light and certainty where thou perceiveſt only a feeble ſpark and unſubſtantial grounds of conjecture. The great bulk of them ſoothe and gladden their hearts, with what can ſcarcely preſerve thee from abſolute deſpondence. — — To thee perhaps every ſentiment, every ſpeech, every action, every purpoſe of mankind is extremely offenſive, which does not exactly tally with the laws of truth, of order, of ſterling virtue, becauſe thou haſt an acute and lively feeling of whatever is good and bad, whatever is beautiful and not beautiful, whatever is becoming and unbecoming; and this occaſionally extorts from thee grievous lamentations on the corruption of thy brethren and deſtroys thy peace. But few of them have the ſame nice moral ſenſe, ſo prompt to take offence and ſo difficult to be ſatisfied, and ſee and hear innumerable things of that nature, without the ſlighteſt diſturbance to their ſatisfaction and inward repoſe. Imagine not therefore, that whatever diſturbs thy peace and happineſs, diſturbs likewiſe the peace and happineſs of others; that whatever affronts, pains, troubles thee, affronts, pains, troubles others likewiſe; that they view with thy eyes and feel with thy ſenſations whatever thou deemeſt imperfection and defect. As every individual has his peculiar organs of ſenſe, which are in one more acute, in another more obtuſe than thine, ſo each individual has likewiſe his peculiar degree of ſenſibility, which alters ſeverally in them in a vaſt variety of ways the impreſſions of outward

ward objects; and the higher and ſuperlative degree of nervous irritability, of delicacy of taſte and ſenſibility of ſoul comparatively belong only to a few. But few perſons therefore are expoſed to the corporeal and mental ſufferings and pains, which occaſionally thence ariſe.

Wouldſt thou fourthly form a true eſtimate of the happineſs of others, my chriſtian brother; judge of the good which they have and enjoy and do, not according to the worth which it has or would have to thee, ſince thou perhaps haſt and enjoyeſt and canſt do ſo much more good. That which in the eyes of the rich is of little or no conſequence, in the eſtimation of the poor is of exceeding great value. That which thou, who liveſt in affluence, ſcarcely heedeſt, attracts perhaps the utmoſt attention, the moſt vehement cupidity of the needy. The little lucky incidents that ſcarcely intereſt thee, the proſperous man, pervade the heart of the unfortunate with the livelieſt joy. The marks of eſteem and affection, which may perhaps be troubleſome to thee, the nobleman, the ſcholar, are ſo many real and reviving cordials to the man of humble ſtation. If the various kindneſſes that are ſhewn to thee, the poſſeſſor of opulence or power, are no longer of any value to thee, yet every piece of civility, every act of relief, every kind office, which the infirm, the wretched, the poor man receives, is an actual, a great boon to him. If thou by long habits of indulgence and delicacy haſt loſt all reliſh for plain and ſimple diet, for innocent and natural pleaſures, yet thouſands and

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thouſands of perſons there are, who taſte in full meaſure the comfort and refreſhment of it, and who with a far inferior proportion of goods, with far ſcantier ſources of amuſement, enjoy far more and far ſincerer pleaſure than thou. If thou, in thy grand, roomy ſphere of action perhaps ſeldom attaineſt thy end and performeſt, what thou art deſirous to perform; if thy beſt deeds and exertions are rarely attended with that ſucceſs which thou expectedſt from them: yet probably thouſands and thouſands of thy brethren in their contracted circle act far more unimpededly and ſurely, effectuate perhaps more good, and enjoy the ſatisfaction which every ſucceſsful termination of the daily labour, the deſirable completion of every taſk, of whatever kind it be, procures to the induſtrious. Never therefore meaſure things, the worth and magnitude whereof depend on ſuch different circumſtances, capacities and habitudes, by one and the ſame ſtandard, and fancy not that thy manner of thinking and judging of them, is common to all mankind.

Wouldſt thou in the fifth place rightly eſtimate and judge of the happineſs of others, neglect not to bring into the account thoſe advantages which are peculiar to them and are entirely foreign to thee. Compute not ſolely thy own riches, but alſo the riches of thy brother, and calculate not the value of theſe by the value of thoſe. Deem neither thyſelf nor any particular claſs of people, to be the only, the principal favourites of nature, or rather the author of na-

ture, and ſuppoſe not that the father in heaven is ſo partially affected towards his children on earth, as to care ſolely for the one, and not for the other, and to withhold all from the one, that he may heap on the other a profuſion of bounty. No, every claſs, every ſtation of mankind, every age poſſeſſes and enjoys the advantages proper to it; the poor as well as the rich, the low as well as the high, the unlearned as well as the learned, the ſervant as well as his maſter, the child and the ſtripling, the man in the prime of life and him that is in the vale of years: each has his peculiar projects, deſires, hopes, expectations, the proſecution and promotion whereof agreeably employs his mind, and he is more or leſs gratified in the accompliſhment of them. Trifling and degrading as the pleaſures and amuſements of the childiſh and puerile age may probably appear to thee, they are great and important to thoſe who enjoy them. Inſipid and diſagreeable as the diverſions of the ruſtic would be to thee, no leſs inſipid and diſagreeable would thine be to him. Difficult and oppreſſive on the other hand as many of his labours and occupations would prove to thee, they are no leſs eaſy and pleaſant to him. Every buſineſs that is beneficial to ſociety, every uſeful trade, every lawful action and exertion that is conducive to the general welfare, brings with it in ſome ſort its own reward, the worth and comfort whereof however can only be known and felt by him who has earnt and deſerved

it. Enjoyeſt thou therefore in thy ſtation and profeſſion advantages, ſatisfactions, comforts which numberleſs others are obliged to forego, forget not, that they in return enjoy various advantages, ſatisfactions and comforts, which to thee are totally foreign and unknown; and for properly weighing them both againſt each other and comparing them together, it requires in general far deeper perceptions and knowledge of the aggregate condition of the individual than uſually fall to our lot.

Wouldſt thou in ſhort, my chriſtian brother, rightly eſtimate and determine of the happineſs of others, in thinking of it ſtop not ſhort at their preſent ſtate, conſider it always in its connection with the future, conſider their expanſion, their perfection, their happineſs, as perpetually increaſing and infinitely progreſſive. The life of man on earth is ſhort, is a tranſient, fleeting dream, but the man himſelf ſhall continue for ever, ſhall never ceaſe to be. The wants, the troubles, the burdens of this life cannot long oppreſs him who bears them; his griefs are as fleeting and momentary as his outward goods and diſtinctions. The happineſs and miſery of a few days or years come into no conſideration at all when ſet againſt the happineſs and miſery of revolving ages, of whole mundane epochas, and even the moſt viewleſs tracts of time, when contraſted with abſolute, endleſs eternity is as a ſingle drop of water to the immenſe depths and extent of the ocean. The

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firſt ſcene can by no means be the whole of the drama, the elucidation of the plot, but only the remote pre-arrangement and preparation to it. The gradations, by which man attains to his mark, to perfection, are innumerable. Here he ſtands on the lowermoſt, the firſt ſtep of human exiſtence. Be cautious how you judge by this of all the reſt which he has to aſcend. Confound not his troubleſome entrance into the world and his firſt tireſome years of education with the full and free enjoyment of that life to which he is approaching. No, here in this nether world man is not all that he can and is deſigned to be and to become. His proſpects are unbounded, his capacity for becoming better, more perfect, more happy, ſtretches to infinity. The futurity that awaits him can and will ſupply to him all the deficiencies of the preſent. God has unnumbered means, there are innumerable worlds in being, where he can more than repay, and moſt certainly will repay creatures, nations, who at preſent, for the ſake of the beſt combination, for the ſake of the fitteſt order of things, are obliged to forego, to bear, to ſuffer anything. Yes, the goods, the delights, the privileges of that ſuperior life will ſoon cauſe the man who was here unmeritedly wretched and unhappy, to forget his wants, his burdens, his ſufferings, nay he will even bleſs them, will rejoice over them, will praiſe the All-gracious for them, as having ſmoothed to him the road to ſuperior joys and felicities, as having rendered him capable and worthy of them.

By thus, my chriſtian brother, connecting the future with the preſent, conſidering the fortunes of mankind in their whole extent, and by judging of their condition agreeably to the rules of prudence, with which our reflections upon the ſubject have ſupplied us, thou wilt aſſuredly find far more happineſs than miſery in the world and among mankind, thou wilt be forced to break out with the pſalmiſt in the words of our text, addreſſed to the eternal father: Thou openeſt thy hand, with the moſt bountiful liberality, and ſatisfieſt the deſire of every living thing; thou doeſt all things well, and thy mercy is over all thy works. And thus wilt thou alſo with greater complacency and ſatisfaction paſs thy time among thy brethren, thou wilt far more highly prize their intrinſic worth and their whole deſignation, and learn to delight thyſelf in it. This however ſhould by no means render thee more indifferent to human miſery and human happineſs. It ſhould by no means abate thy zeal to avert as much as poſſible the former and to augment the latter. No, be ſenſible to all the good and to all the evil that befals thy brother, juſt as though it befel thyſelf. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Do thou operate and promote in the ſphere allotted thee by God, as much good; do thou there comfort, cheer, relieve as many wretched and drooping and troubled ſouls as ever thou canſt. But, that done, reſign with a tranquil ſpirit and faithful confidence the government of the whole and the approximation

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of all to ever greater perfection and happineſs, to that being who is the creator and father of all, and has deſigned them all for perfection and happineſs. Thus wilt thou fulfil thy duty and in the fulfilling of it be contented and happy.

SERMON LIV.

Adjuſtment of the Notion concerning the Happineſs of the future Life.

GOD, bountiful creator and father of mankind, thou haſt endowed the human nature with great capacities and powers, and made it capable of great things. Neither haſt thou deſigned it for the moment of this terreſtrial life alone, no, thou haſt deſtined it to an everlaſting continuance, to a bleſſed immortality. Our buſineſs here is to become intelligent and wiſe and virtuous, and along the paths of wiſdom and virtue to proceed to ever greater perfection. Already here we have ſatisfactions and delights of various kinds to enjoy, and thereby to render ourſelves capable of ſuperior ſatisfactions and purer delights in a better world. Thou wilt hereafter judge and deal with every one, in ſuch manner as is conſiſtent with his nature, his capacities, his previous behaviour on earth. If by perſevering induſtry in good works we ſtrive after real honour, after laſting pleaſure, thou wilt exalt us to eternal life, to an everlaſting, ever increaſing happineſs. God, how grand, how glorious is our deſtination! How richly deſerving of our moſt ardent zeal, our uninterrupted

uninterrupted fidelity in ſtriving at the attainment of it! Oh might it be continually before our eyes, to regulate and direct us through every period of our lives. Here indeed we walk by faith and not by ſight. Indeed we know but little of what we ſhall be and become hereafter. Our paſſage indeed from the preſent into the future life is ſurrounded with dangers and obſcurities. But what ſhould we not, what may we not aſſuredly hope from thee, our tender and gracious father? How calmly and confidently may we reſign ourſelves to thy guidance and direction! What light, what authentic hope is afforded us in this reſpect in the goſpel of thy ſon Jeſus! Might we only reflect upon it more frequently, and more employ our thoughts in meditations on the things that relate to our future ſuperior ſtate! Might at leaſt the preſent and viſible leſs delude and incumber our immortal mind! Might even the conſiderations we are now about to take in hand upon the ſubject, contribute ſomewhat to the promotion of this view! Grant then that theſe doctrines, which are ſo intimately connected with our peace and happineſs, may ſtrike us in their full importance. Cauſe them to ſhed light into our minds, and lead us to a more juſt and lively knowledge of objects that it concerns us ſo highly to know. Theſe benefits we implore of thee in the name of our lord and ſaviour Jeſus Chriſt, and call upon thee farther in the full aſſurance of hope: Our father, &c.

ROMANS ii. 6, 7.

Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.

CONCERNING the happineſs of the future life, its occupations and delights, we are indeed unable to form any clear and adequate conceptions. The changes wrought in our ſtate and condition by death; the ſeparation of our mind from its body, by which it received its notices and ſenſations from without, and operated on ſurrounding objects; the diſſolution of the ſeveral ties that held us to viſible things; our tranſition into the unſeen, the ſpiritual world: all this muſt neceſſarily have ſo various and great an influence on our mode of exiſtence, of thought, of ſenſation, of action, that towards acquiring any thing like an accurate ſtatement of it, neither experience, nor reflection, nor the method of drawing concluſions from ſimilar cauſes of ſimilar effects, will enable us to proceed far. Neither has it ſeemed good to divine providence to give us any preciſe information on the ſubject by Jeſus, who has brought life and immortality to light by his goſpel. Any advertiſement of this kind was indeed impoſſible, as relating to objects too remote from all that we have ever experienced or conceived, to admit of its being couched in the terms and expreſſions of human language. And if it had been practicable to give us more light upon the matter, yet in the preſent ſtate

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it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that we ſhould not have been able to bear that light. It would probably have rendered the troubles of it much leſs ſupportable, its occupations and concerns much more trifling and diſagreeable, and perhaps frequently have inflamed our aſpirations for futurity even to impatience and diſcontent with the preſent.

Nevertheleſs, by rational reflection on the nature and deſtination of man and on the connection of the preſent with the future, we may rectify our notions in many reſpects concerning the happineſs of the ſuperior life, and thereby render them more efficacious. We may learn to perceive what is erroneous and fallacious in ſome of the component ideas which diminiſh this efficacy, and change them for others which may render the ſentiment of futurity much more important and gladdening, than it otherwiſe could be. And here in fact we deſcry one of the principal reaſons how it happens that the hope and expectation of a better life after death has ſo little effect upon ſuch numbers of perſons and chriſtians, and promotes neither their virtue nor their contentment in any remarkable degree. They are but too apt to view it on a ſide, on which it can have but few charms for them, on which it muſt even be greatly repulſive to them. Let us avoid theſe errors, my devout hearers, and endeavour to correct at leaſt our general notions of the conſtitution and happineſs of the future life, though it ſhould not be granted us to aſcertain

certain it in all its parts. This is the deſign of my preſent diſcourſe.

God, it is ſaid in our text, will render to every man according to his deeds. Namely to thoſe, who by perſeverance in well-doing ſeek for glory, for honour and immortality, eternal life or everlaſting happineſs. Though the declaration is general, we ſhall find it not the leſs fruitful in juſt conſequences, if at the ſame time we reflect on the nature of man and on the caſe itſelf. I ſhall proceed therefore to avail myſelf of theſe words for preſenting you with a few obſervations which may tend to rectify the vulgar notions concerning the happineſs of the future life, and thereby furniſh you with matter for farther reflections on the ſubject.

The firſt obſervation is this: the happineſs of the future life, of which we are ſpeaking, is the happineſs of man, therefore a human happineſs; a happineſs, ſuited to creatures of that kind and ſpecies that man is of, adapted to his nature, his capacities, his eſſential limitations. The matter itſelf requires no proof. Whenever we think on our happineſs, and ſpeak about our happineſs, we can mean no other than human happineſs, and ſpeak of no other than human happineſs, ſince we are men, we are to ſurvive as men, it will, as the text declares, be rendered to us according to our deeds, and we have no clear and diſtinct ideas of any other kind of being and of well-being, than what is human. Though this

this however is ſo plain and undeniable yet we ſeldom make the proper application of it; frequently conceiving of the future happineſs as of ſomething altogether ſuperhuman, or incongruous with the human nature. Few, too few perſons perceive and feel the dignity of human nature, the full worth of their faculties and endowments. Too many form ſuch low and deſpicable ideas of it, that they can hardly afford to connect anything great, anything deſirable, with the words man and human. Others are ſo diſſatisfied with all that is and happens among mankind, that they are in a manner aſhamed of belonging to their community, and think they can never raiſe their thoughts high enough above all that is human, in conceiving of perfection and happineſs. Theſe ideas however cannot alter the nature of things; error does not enhance truth. Man is man and continues to be man, and if he is to be and to become happy, he muſt be and become ſo as man. But he may and is deſigned to be and to become a progreſſively better, progreſſively perfecter, progreſſively happier man. This is his deſtination. And this deſtination is certainly grand and worthy our utmoſt, unabated exertions.

Think not therefore, my pious hearers, that on the diſſolution of your groſs corporeal ſhell you will ceaſe to be men, that by death you ſhall be tranſlated into a ſuperior claſs of beings and as it were deified. Expect not therefore a happineſs which you are not capable of enjoying. Many infirmities indeed, many grievances,

grievances, many imperfections, which are grounded in your body, in your connections with the viſible world, in your preſent ſtate, will entirely fall away. But the wants, the limitations, the imperfections, which have their deeply ſeated cauſe in your very nature, will not therefore fall away. You will not there any more than here be omniſcient, almighty, independent: accordingly, there as well as here not underſtand ſome things, of ſome others have only obſcure and incomplete notions, not be able to undertake and achieve ſome things, ſome others but imperfectly and defectively. The ſtation which you ſhall occupy in the kingdom of God, the connections in which you will ſtand with his other ſubjects, the particular views which you are then to attain and to promote, will always confine you to certain bounds which you cannot exceed. Your horizon and ſphere of action will always have its ſtated limits, though you may entertain the hope, that it will be continually enlarging in proportion to your faculties and your fidelity. Neither can and will all impediments and difficulties in the application of your faculties fall away, though the generality of thoſe which now clog and encumber you will be no more. How could you exerciſe and ſtrengthen your human faculties without obſtacles and difficulties; how capacitate and qualify yourſelf for greater things? How could a limited creature, a man, imagine that he needs only to will, for bringing to effect what he holds to be right and proper, and the fitteſt for the preſent occaſion?

caſion? This is a prerogative of deity, which can never be the portion of any created being. No, even in that ſuperior ſtate ye will employ, exert your faculties, ſometimes with better, ſometimes with leſs ſucceſs, even then ye will enjoy the ſatisfaction of having ſurmounted obſtacles and vanquiſhed difficulties, and thereby progreſſively become more perfect. All this is grounded in our nature, and cannot be ſeparated from that happineſs, if it is to be a human happineſs.

The happineſs of the future life however will and muſt be, ſecondly, not only adapted to the human nature in general, or to that which is common to all mankind, and what conſtitutes them men, but alſo to the nature of each individual perſon in particular, or to what conſtitutes each individual that man which he is and can be in the combination of things. Human nature is a complex notion, a univerſal idea, a term by which we denote certain properties and faculties, which are found more or leſs, thus or otherwiſe in all the creatures of that ſpecies. In fact there are as many human natures, as there are individual perſons. No one is abſolutely and in all reſpects exactly that which another is. Each has his peculiar meaſure of intellectual and corporeal capacities and powers; each his particular, thus or otherwiſe determined, mode of ſenſation, of perception, of thought, of volition, of action; each has his appointed ſtation in the world, whereby his horizon as well

well as his ſphere of operation is in numberleſs ways altered, contracted and enlarged. Each is therefore capable of only one certain perfection and happineſs, peculiar to him and adapted to his nature, which though not in eſſentials, is yet in ſcope and degree extremely different. If we are to loſe this peculiarity, this individuality, in the future life; we ſhall then alſo loſe the conſciouſneſs of ourſelf, the recollection of the paſt, all perſonality: thus would no reward, no puniſhment, no retribution have place; thus would not we, but other beings in our place be happy or miſerable. Manifold and different therefore as are our natural and acquired capacities, abilities, aptitudes, our diſpoſitions and the cultivation of them in the preſent life: no leſs different and manifold will they alſo proportionately be in the future. Each will therefore riſe to that perfection and happineſs, of which he is ſuſceptible; each be and yield and enjoy, what he perſonally and in his ſtation can be and yield and enjoy. — Greater perfection, purer happineſs will indeed be the portion of all the bleſſed. But this perfection, this happineſs will manifeſt itſelf in extremely diverſe forms by extremely diverſe effects; and even this will produce the completeſt harmony, the moſt admirable concord of the whole, and the more rapid progreſs of every part of it to ſtill higher perfection. Envy and jealouſy, which here diſturb this harmony, are paſſions too baſe and ſordid, ariſing chiefly from terreſtrial corporeal wants, and imply illuſions and errors too ſenſual and groſs for admiſſion

admiſſion into that perfect ſtate. But univerſal approbation and veneration of all that is beautiful and good; but diſintereſted, liberal communication of all our abilities and endowments; but mutual blithe enjoyment of all the good that is poſſeſſed and done by each; but generous emulation in ſtriving after higher perfection: theſe are the qualities which we may juſtly ſuppoſe in a ſociety of virtuous and happy people, and which authoriſe us to expect none other than the moſt bleſſed conſequences even from the great, the infinite diverſity of the degrees of their happineſs. Hence conclude, my pious hearers, that in yon better life every intelligent and really good perſon will find that food for his mind and for his heart, thoſe means for extending and correcting his knowledge and for refining his ſentiments, thoſe opportunities and encouragements for the application and exerciſe of his faculties, thoſe motives and calls to great and generous actions, thoſe grounds of content and ſatisfaction, thoſe ſources of delight, which are beſt ſuited to the degree of his culture and ſuſceptibility, and which may therefore lead him by the moſt natural, moſt eaſy paths to higher attainments of knowledge, of virtue, of diligence and activity, of joy and felicity. As in the natural world all advances gradually to perfection, ſtill more does it in the moral. All goes hand in hand in both, all flows together in mild commixtures of light and ſhade, all marches onwards, quietly, imperceptibly, but infallibly. No where

can we perceive any chaſms, no where any thing parted or broken off from the reſt, that is not intimately connected with it. All in God's creation is harmony, and all will even in our eyes diſſolve into ever greater harmony.

This leads me to a third obſervation, which is: the happineſs of the future life will exactly tally with the nature and conſtitution of the paſt, the former life, the life on earth; it will not be a ſtate abruptly ſeparated and detached from it but in cloſe conjunction and coherence with it, it will be continuation, eaſier and ſpeedier continuation, more unimpeded growth of that perfection and felicity, which we have already here poſſeſſed and enjoyed, or whereof we have here rendered ourſelves capable and ſuſceptible. If we are to enjoy that felicity with conſciouſneſs; if we are to perceive and feel its preference to the former terrene life; if it is to be really a reward for our integrity and virtue; if we are to learn wiſdom from our trials and from the conſequences of our actions, and thus to mount to a higher ſpecies adapted to our nature: then this cloſe conjunction and coherence muſt neceſſarily ſubſiſt between our preſent and our future life. And how big with the moſt important conſequences is this truth! Therefore all that we here conceive and intend, neglect and do, wherein we exerciſe ourſelves or not, muſt have an influence on our future ſuperior ſtate. Therefore the degree of knowledge, of wiſdom, of virtue, of felicity, of capacity whereto

we here attain, muſt determine the degree of goods and excellences to which we ſhall there attain. Therefore we ſhall be ſo much the happier and more bleſſed there, the better and more virtuous we have been here. Thus ſhall we therefore in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the expreſſion, reap there what we have here ſown.

Never then in your thoughts and expectations put aſunder, what in its very nature is ſo cloſely and indiſſolubly joined together. Expect no harveſt where you have not ſown, no produce where you have not ploughed, no triumph where you have not fought and outſtood the conflict, no recompenſe where you have not diſtinguiſhed yourſelf by faithfulneſs and integrity. Expect no pleaſures, no delights, no felicities, for which you have at preſent no taſte, and which you would not now have enjoyed in their commencements and as it were in their firſt elements. Promiſe yourſelf no authority, no advantages, no efficacy, to which you ſhall not have prepared the way, by the fidelity wherewith you ſhall have maintained your poſt and your dignity. Think not that the deity will ſupply by a miracle, by ſupernatural means, what you have here neglected and ſquandered away by careleſſneſs and ſloth. God can never view the degree of your temporal goodneſs and perfection otherwiſe than it actually is; and judge and treat you otherwiſe than truth demands, never impute to you merits, which you do not poſſeſs; never promote you to pre-eminences and felicities, for which you are not qualified. God

will render to every man according to his deeds: this is the ſupreme immutable principle of his moral government, proclaimed to us by all that we know concerning his perfection and our own nature.

And this, my dear friends, ſhould render the preſent life, with all its occupations and duties and trials, with all its joys and ſufferings truly important to you! All is linked with the future, all has influence on it; nothing is in regard to it abſolutely indifferent. All is ſeed, puſhing forth in concealment and hereafter to bear fruit, the tares as well as the wheat, noxious weeds as well as ſalutary and fragrant herbs. All contributes its properties to the expanſion and direction of our capacities and powers, to the formation of our mind and our heart, to the refinement or to the corruption of our inclination and our taſte, to our greater or inferior aptitude in good. All is prearrangement and preparative to our ſuperior ſtate, all commencement and preamble to what we ſhall then be and become. In your thoughts therefore, always unite the future with the preſent. Conſider, judge, neglect, do, bear and enjoy all in reference to the conſequences with which it will hereafter be attended to you. This will give additional weight and dignity to all that you conceive and do; this will render every ſacrifice that virtue demands of you, eaſy, and every, even the hardeſt duty, ſhe impoſes on you, a delight. Thus will you already in this nether world have your converſation in heaven, and think and live as behoves men who are ordained to inceſſant, ever increaſing perfection and happineſs.

SERMON LV.

Adjuſtment of the Notion concerning the Happineſs of the future Life.

GOD, what proſpects haſt thou diſcovered to us in the remoteſt depths of futurity! What hopes haſt thou raiſed in us, children of the duſt! What may we, what ſhall we not hereafter be and become, if here we do thy will, and capacitate ourſelves for that ſuperior, better life which thou haſt prepared for us! What heights on the ſcale of perfection and happineſs may we not, ſhall we not then aſcend! By what important, noble occupations exerciſe and ſtrengthen our faculties! With what glorious beings worſhip thee, our common creator and father, and what delight and bliſs ſhall we enjoy in the adoration of thee! What light will then break in upon our darkneſs, what indefatigable activity and what rapid progreſs in good will then take place of the feeble and often unſucceſsful attempts, with which we at preſent ſtrive to become better! Yes, from thee, the All-bountiful, who haſt given us ſuch promiſes and already done ſo great things for us, we may and ought to expect all that can render us perfect and happy. Might but theſe expectations be always as firm, as faithful, and as efficacious in us, as is conſiſtent with their magnificence and thy infinite

bounty and paternal tenderneſs! Might we in life and in death, in regard to the preſent and to the future world, as calmly and contentedly reſign ourſelves to thee as becomes children of ſuch a father! Yes, we cannot better honour thee, than by confidently expecting of thee nought but good and conſtantly the beſt. Oh do thou confirm us in theſe filial ſentiments ſo well pleaſing unto thee! Let them particularly animate us, when we are ſurrounded by darkneſs, and are preſſed by the limitations of our preſent ſtate. Teach us by faith in thee and thy ſon Jeſus to vanquiſh the terrors of death and the grave, and with courage and joy to preſs forward through this ſhort terrene life, to the ſuperior, better ſtate. Beſtow thy bleſſing to this end on the meditations that are now to employ us. Cauſe them to conduct us in the paths of truth, and ſtrengthen and cheer us on our way. We aſk theſe mercies of thee in the name of our lord, and ſtedfaſtly truſting in his promiſes addreſs thee further, in the prayer which he compoſed himſelf and delivered unto us. Our father, &c.

ROM. ii. 6, 7.

Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.

LATELY, my pious audience, I delivered to you a few obſervations adapted to correct ſome vulgar notions, about the happineſs of the future life, in

in order to furniſh you with matter for reflection on that important doctrine of religion and chriſtianity. Three leading principles at that time employed our attention. The happineſs of the future life, I told you, is the happineſs of man, therefore a human happineſs; a happineſs ſuited to creatures of that kind and ſpecies which man is of, adapted to his nature, to his capacities, to his eſſential limitations. The happineſs of the future life, I farther ſaid, is and muſt be adapted not only to the human nature in general, or to that which all men have in common together and what makes them men, but alſo to the nature of each individual in particular, or to that which makes each man what he is, and can be in the combination of things. That happineſs, I in ſhort told you, will accurately correſpond with the quality of the previous life, the life on earth; that it will not be a ſtate entirely ſeparate and detached, ſubſiſting of itſelf apart, but intimately concatenated to it, a more perfect continuation of it. We will now proceed in theſe inquiries, my devout hearers, and take into conſideration three more obſervations of the ſame tendency. They are theſe: The happineſs of the future life has innumerable ſteps and degrees, and will be always gradually increaſing; it is ſecondly a very active; it is thirdly a ſocial life.

Firſt then: the happineſs of the future life has innumerable ſteps and degrees, and is a gradually increaſing, perpetually growing happineſs. This is a perfectly natural and neceſſary conſequence of our

foregoing obſervations. If this happineſs is to be not only adapted to the human nature in general, but to the nature of each individual perſon in particular; if it is to be intimately connected with the nature and quality of his previous life on earth, and a conſequence, a continuation of it, it muſt in its ſtages and degrees be as manifold and diverſified, as mankind themſelves and their moral conduct upon earth are ſo. It will be determined by their greater or leſs ſuſceptibility of it, and this proceeds from their greater or inferior cultivation, from their faithful or leſs faithful employment of their capacities and powers, their years of education and diſcipline. Benefits, ſatisfactions, felicities, that we are totally ignorant of, do not eſteem, know not how to enjoy; which have no analogy and connection with whatever elſe appears to us moſt covetable and deſirable; which are not ſuited to our inclination and our taſte, to our feelings and our mind: would be no benefit, no ſatisfaction, no felicity to us, if they ſhould fall to our lot. As various as the capacity for enjoyment and for being happy is at preſent even among intelligent and worthy perſons: ſo various will it alſo be hereafter. The happier, I ſay not the more fortunate, not the more wealthy, the more powerful, the greater, no, the happier the worſhipper of God, the chriſtian, has been already here; the more ſatisfaction and the more inward pleaſure he has found and enjoyed in whatever is true and beautiful and proper: ſo much the happier will he become there; ſo much

much the more pleaſure will he find and enjoy in the very ſame objects. Of this no man, let him open the ſacred volume where he will, can harbour the ſmalleſt doubt; in every page of it that happineſs is repreſented to us as a ſtate of retribution and reward, as the harveſt of what we have here ſown. God, it is ſaid in our text and in very many places beſides, will render to every man according to his deeds. He that ſoweth ſparingly, ſays the apoſtle, ſhall reap alſo ſparingly; and he which ſoweth bountifully ſhall reap alſo bountifully. The ſervant who had been particularly faithful and diligent in the management of his maſter's affairs, is according to the repreſentation of our ſaviour appointed ruler over ten, another over five cities; to one will be delivered and entruſted more, to another leſs, according as he has in one way or another employed and improved the talents, goods and endowments committed to him here. To the victor, to the conqueror, who for righteouſneſs' ſake has done much, ſuffered much, forborne much, has ſacrificed much to God and to his duty, who as a true follower of his lord has become like him in doing and in ſuffering and like him has been faithful unto the end, for him peculiar, reſplendent glories are reſerved. He who ſuffers here with Jeſus, ſhall there alſo reign with him: he who dies with him or like him for his brethren, for the general welfare, ſhall alſo be partaker in his divine life.

Behold here, my pious hearers, an object worthy

of the utmoſt ſtretch of human ambition; and never loſe ſight of the celeſtial prize. Surely if ye perceive and feel the dignity of your nature, the grandeur of your deſtination; if ye be really capable of greater and nobler ſentiments and endeavours; if ye wiſh to become and to afford, all that ever ye can become and afford: ye ſhould not be contented with that degree of wiſdom and virtue, which will juſt ſave you from the puniſhments of the future world and lift ye to ſome perhaps very inferior ſtage of happineſs. No, ſtrive with unremitted ardour after ever purer and ſuperior wiſdom and virtue, that hereafter ye may aſcend to a ſo much higher ſtage of perfection and happineſs, that ye may make nearer approaches to Jeſus, the captain of your ſalvation, and obtain a larger ſhare in his glory. Never forget, that he who from ſenſuality and indolence reſtrains the aſpirations and efforts of his immortal mind after perfection, and contents himſelf with any ſtage of it, however low, runs a great hazard of miſſing even that inferior ſtage, and of entirely depriving himſelf of the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of any real happineſs.

As certainly however as the happineſs of the future world has innumerable ſtages and degrees: ſo certain is it likewiſe that it will gradually increaſe and perpetually grow in the ſame proportion. We cannot comprehend all things, underſtand all things, enjoy all things at once; we cannot with our faculties at once perform all things that they are abſolutely

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able to perform. But we can progreſſively learn to comprehend and underſtand more, progreſſively to feel and enjoy more, progreſſively to undertake and achieve more. It is the prerogative of our nature, that it can be infinitely elevated and perfected; but by reaſon of its inherent limitation, this can only be done gradually, by little and little. Were the happineſs of that life to come ſuddenly upon us in the higheſt degree of perfection of which the human nature is capable, we ſhould loſe the conſciouſneſs of ourſelf, our perſonality, and that happineſs could be neither the conſequence nor the reward of our life on earth. But even this, my dear friends, will confer an additional value on that happineſs in our eyes. What a glorious ſentiment, the ſentiment of ever increaſing aptitude in good, of ever greater capacity for more important affairs, for purer delights; what a raviſhing proſpect, that of the aſſured hope, by perpetual experience confirmed, of everlaſtingly proceeding from one ſtage of knowledge, of wiſdom, of virtue, to another, and thus of approaching forever nearer to God, the inexhauſtible ſource of all perfection and happineſs! Oh what ſhould we here not readily do and bear, what ſhould appear too difficult and laborious, for being worthy of this exalted hope! Yes, let every man that hath, or would have this hope in him purify himſelf, even as he, our captain and lord, is pure!

The happineſs of the future life will ſecondly be an active, a buſy life, occupied in a continued ſucceſſion of good, virtuous deeds. This is grounded

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in our nature. Without activity, without exertion and application of power no conception of life can be formed, at leaſt of a contented and happy life. No, the eaſier, the ſurer, the more unobſtructedly we can uſe our capacities and powers; the more unreſtricted and freely we can employ them in purſuance of our own perceptions and in promoting the objects of our own choice; the more we can execute by them, and the more completely we can execute by them that to which we apply them: the more contented and happy are we here, and the more contented and happy in the ſame proportion ſhall we be there. Thus alone do we exiſt and live with conſciouſneſs, and rejoice in our exiſtence and our life. Thus alone are we ſenſible of the perfection to which we have already attained, and triumph by anticipation in the ſuperior perfection we are ſtriving to reach. In what elſe, I would aſk, conſiſts the conſummate perfection and happineſs of the deity, but in unbounded activity, in the moſt full and entire application of his infinite power, which upholds all, vivifies all, operates in all and through all, conducts all to his ſupreme deſign, to univerſal good, and is inceſſantly diffuſing life and energy and joy and felicity throughout the whole creation?

Imagine not therefore, that the happineſs of the future life, as we are apt but too often to repreſent it, conſiſts in ſuch a viſion of God and his glory, in ſuch a conſtant enjoyment of felicity and delight, in ſuch extatic tranſports, as leave us in a ſimply paſſive con-

condition, yielding to the impreſſions of extrinſic objects, without any concomitant action of our own. In that caſe, theſe emotions and this enjoyment would preſently become indifferent to us; at leaſt we ſhould always remain at the ſame point of perfection and happineſs, and come ſhort of the true end of our being. But likewiſe hence conclude, my pious hearers, that a dull, inert, inactive, lazy life, conſumed in fruitleſs, idle meditations, in unprofitable, mechanical exerciſes of devotion, can never poſſibly be the proper preparation for that ſuperior and better life which we expect after death. No, the more faithfully we here employ our talents and abilities; the more diligently we here fulfil the ſeveral duties of our ſtation and calling; the more uſeful we endeavour to become to our brethren; the more unremittedly and unweariedly we here labour and effectuate good; the more active and buſy the whole of our life on earth is: the more fit and qualified do we render ourſelves for that better, ſuperior life.

It is true, the ſcripture promiſes to the godly a reſt in the life to come. It is true, the weary pilgrim on earth frequently ſighs for reſt; and the more obſtacles he meets with on his courſe, the more burdens he has to bear, the more eagerly will he long for reſt. But reſt is not inaction, and he who is panting for reſt feels a painful languor and fatigue. This being removed, and the man can uſe his ſtrength without impediment, or maſter the oppoſition

poſition he finds, inſtead of ſinking beneath it; or if he diſcover ſources whence he may continually derive freſh vigour, and which he can never exhauſt: activity, the moſt diverſified activity is then his real life, his peculiar happineſs.

And what a diverſified, generous, glorious activity may not creatures who poſſeſs energies ſo various, ſo great and ſo capable of greater elevation, expect in a ſtate, where they are no longer obliged to provide for the neceſſities of this animal, terrene life, will no longer meet with ſo much oppoſition on all ſides, no longer groan under the infirmities and pains of their groſs terreſtrial ſhell, no longer ſpend the greater part of their lives in ſaving and hoarding for the other, where in the objects and perſons around them they will probably find as many encouragements and alleviations in the beſt and moſt uſeful activity as they have here found obſtacles and reſtraints. And how can an intelligent and good man in that ſtate ever be wanting in objects and opportunities for the nobleſt and moſt beneficial activity, while he is a ſubject of the immenſe kingdom of God, a citizen of his univerſe, which is infinite in extent and replete with innumerable wonders; while he lives among perſons, among beings who are placed in various reciprocal connections and relations, who mutually communicate and receive the perceptions and abilities of each other, who mutually teach and learn, who advance hand in hand to greater perfection, and may mutually alleviate in num-

numberleſs methods every ſtep on the road to it? What new exerciſes for our faculties, what important affairs, what honourable commiſſions will the father and preceptor of mankind conſign to us in proportion to the integrity and fidelity with which we have here fulfilled his purpoſes, and finiſhed the taſk which he ſet us to do! How much greater affairs ſhall we then be called to undertake and to achieve, if we have been faithful in the little that was entruſted to us here, if we have employed theſe years of our firſt education and nurture on earth to the ends to which they were appointed, if we have quitted the ſchool of this life with the experience and accompliſhments which we may and ought to acquire in it. Though we can form no adequate idea of the ſpecific kinds of our future acts, of the performances and occupations that await us, yet our nature and our deſignation, yet the promiſes of the All-gracious give us room alſo in this particular to expect far, far more than we are at preſent able to conceive. And this may amply ſuffice to encourage us to the faithful application of the talents and endowments committed to us here, and to cauſe us never to be remiſs, never to be weary in well doing.

In ſhort, my pious hearers, and this is my third obſervation, the happineſs of the future life will be in a ſtate of ſociety, will be enjoyed by numbers in common, and thus infinitely multiplied and heightened. The ſacred writings allow us not to doubt of it. They ſpeak of aſſemblies of juſt men made per-

fect; of a future city, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, whoſe builder and maker is God; of many manſions in the Father's houſe, in which our forerunner Jeſus prepares a place for us, and in which all his faithful followers aſſemble round him; of a near and continual being with the Lord, and the concomitant enjoyment of the glory which the Father has given him. We poſſeſs the diſpoſitions, the capacities for ſocial life. We have a propenſity, not leſs general than ſtrong to attachment and union. We find in this mutual attachment and union a ſource no leſs abundant than pure of ſatisfaction and pleaſure. We cannot figure to ourſelves any diſtinction, any happineſs as very deſirable, or altogether ſatisfactory, which we cannot communicate to any one elſe, nor partake with any one elſe. And how could mankind better exerciſe and ſtrengthen their faculties and endowments, than by imparting them to each other, mutually aſſiſting one another by the uſe of them, applying them to ſocial concerns and views, and hand in hand ſtriving forward to ſuperior perfection? How could even the life to come be an active life, unleſs we act upon others and others upon us, unleſs we mutually impart our emotions, our ſentiments, our perceptions, our experiences, our aptitudes, our ſatisfactions, and produce thereby a variety of alterations without us? How could in ſhort that happineſs be a ſtate of retribution, if the ſeveral connections with the perſons among whom we have lived, from whom we have

have received good and to whom we have done good, who have corrected and improved us, or have been corrected and improved by us, were entirely to drop off? We cannot indeed by any means aſcertain the nature and extent of theſe future relations, any more than the method of carrying on our reciprocal communications and of living in ſociety. Indeed numberleſs things of this kind that relate to our preſent wants and limitations, to our preſent earthly life, will no longer ſubſiſt; and it would be idle preſumption to pretend, in the darkneſs that ſurrounds us at preſent, to define objects which, according to the expreſſion of holy writ, eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. The true worſhipper of God, the chriſtian, reſigns all this with calmneſs and compoſure of mind to the conſummate wiſdom and goodneſs of the Moſt High, and expects of him likewiſe in this reſpect far more than we are yet able to comprehend and to conceive.

And what proſpects ariſe to him in the full aſſurance of faith from this expectation! What delights, what felicities, does it not allow him to hope for! To ſee the Lord, his deliverer, his ſovereign benefactor, the complete exemplar of human virtue and perfection, the reſtorer of human dignity and freedom; the Lord, the captain of his ſalvation, whom he already here ſo fervently loves, and in whom he ſo cordially rejoices, to behold him, to converſe with him, to be led into all truth by him,

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and to be a partaker in his glory: what hopes, what expectations muſt this awaken in the heart of the chriſtian who deſervedly bears that title! And then — to be ſeparated from fools and profligates, from the vicious and the vain, from tyrants and ſlaves, to join the aſſembly of the intelligent, the wiſe, the virtuous of all ages and nations, to enter into cloſe connection and intimacy with them, to learn of them and with them, to conſider and uſe their light as his light, their abilities as his abilities, their happineſs as his happineſs, to admire and adore in communion with them the univerſal Father, the lord God omnipotent, in his works, to operate with them in a new and more extenſive ſphere of action, and to be occupied for the general proſperity of the kingdom of God, and thus with them to proceed from one point of perfection to another: what have we not to expect from it! What inexhauſtible ſources of happineſs are now opened and prepared for us! Oh let us now, my dear friends, let us even now, to-day, while it is called to-day, endeavour to render ourſelves continually more capable and worthy of this delightful, this ſacred intercourſe; let us already here ſo think and live, as becomes the citizens of heaven, as becomes beings who are called to ſuch abundant and exalted happineſs. Even here ſhould wiſdom and virtue and piety be the ultimate aim of our endeavours, as they will hereafter be the baſis and the ſtandard of our entire felicity.

SERMON LVI.

By what means we capacitate ourſelves for the Happineſs of the future Life.

GOD, though our life on earth be ſo ſhort and fleeting, it is nevertheleſs extremely important in its deſtination and in its conſequences. It is the firſt period of an exiſtence that is never entirely to ceaſe, the preparation to a life that is to endure for ever and to become perpetually more perfect and happy. Here it is thy gracious purpoſe to educate us for that ſuperior, better life. Here we are by wiſdom and virtue to become capable of the occupations and ſatisfactions of it. Here we are to learn to obey thee, to love thee, to put our truſt in thee, to love our brethren and to conduce in heart and life to the general welfare, and hereafter in the purer enjoyment of thy love, in the compleater accompliſhment of thy will, in the moſt generally uſeful activity to find that joy and felicity, which we here only know and enjoy in their firſt beginnings. God, how can we be careful and diligent enough, in availing ourſelves of theſe reſplendent hopes? How

with competent fidelity manage and tranſact what thou haſt here committed to our truſt? Far be all indolence, all remiſſneſs in good from us! Far be it from us, ever to ſtand ſtill on the path that leads to wiſdom and virtue, to chriſtian perfection, or ever to be weary in well-doing. No, to employ all our capacities and powers, all our gifts and endowments agreeably to thy will, to become progreſſively wiſer and better, to think and to act continually more conſcientiouſly, to obey thee with ever greater inclination and delight, to reſign ourſelves more and more dutifully and confidently to thy parental guidance, and thereby to render ourſelves more capable of ever greater tranſactions, of ever ſublimer joys: be this the ultimate object of our ambition, this our unremitted aim! God, confirm thou us in theſe pious ſentiments and reſolutions, and cauſe them even by the meditations which we now purpoſe to engage in, to become active, lively, and truly efficacious in us. Teach us here to think and live ſo as to become continually more capable and worthy of that better everlaſting life, which thou haſt promiſed us by Jeſus. Hearken to our prayer, which we offer up to thee in his name, and conclude, as his votaries, with filial confidence, in his own prevailing words: Our father, &c.

ROM. ii. 6, 7.

Who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.

NOBODY can with any degree of attention reflect on the happineſs of the future life, nobody can figure it to himſelf in any lively manner, but he muſt immediately feel a longing deſire to obtain it. What is more natural to man than the wiſh for happineſs, for continued, ever-increaſing, never-ending happineſs? How is it poſſible for him to be indifferent to the doom that awaits him after death, ſince this death may come upon him ſo ſoon, ſo unexpectedly, to-day or to-morrow, and put an end to his preſent ſtate of being? And how deeply fallen from his native dignity muſt that man be, who can be thoroughly ſatisfied with the pleaſures of this terreſtrial life, which are ſo uncertain, ſo tranſient, mingled with ſo many pains and diſquietudes, ſo much diſguſt and languor, ſo as to ſuppreſs in his heart all deſire for a better, a ſuperior ſtate, for purer and more laſting enjoyment! No, the deſire, the ardent deſire of greater perfection and happineſs is, with but few exceptions, common to all thoſe of the ſpecies who by culture and inſtruction are awakened to reflection. They are therefore ever ready to do or to abſtain from ſomething or other, greater or leſs, in order to obtain their deſire. What penances, what mortifications, what torments have they not

voluntarily endured for this purpoſe! How great the ſacrifices by which they have thought to purchaſe heaven? How have they racked their invention for bodily exerciſes and external rites to the ſame end! As their notions however of that happineſs were and ſtill are very often erroneous, ſo muſt all their endeavours to obtain it be fruitleſs. Whereas, the more we ſtudy to elucidate and rectify thoſe ideas, the better ſhall we learn alſo how to know and to employ the means whereby we may become partakers of that happineſs. I intend therefore, my pious hearers, to make the application, and ſo to increaſe the benefit of my former diſcourſes on this ſubject, by pointing out to you the means whereby we may render ourſelves moſt capable of the happineſs of the future life, and how we may beſt prepare for it.

It is manifeſt to every reflecting mind, that ſingle, tranſient actions or practices, however right and proper in themſelves, cannot be the beſt, the proper means for capacitating and fitting oneſelf for a ſtate that is to be fixt and permanent. Only that which gives the proper tone and direction to our temper, our character; only that which produces laſting alterations in our mind, and procures a greater dexterity in particular matters: that alone is due preparation for the happineſs of the ſuperior life. Though we ſhould therefore never ſo punctually attend the duties of public and private worſhip; though we ſhould paſs never ſo much time in fervent

vent prayer for the felicity of heaven; though we ſhould conſume the laſt hours, the laſt days, the laſt months, the laſt years of our life in continued exerciſes of devotion, but at the ſame time ſlight and neglect our moral correction and improvement: all the former would avail us nothing, and we ſhould become by it not at all the more capacitated and fitted for the enjoyment of celeſtial happineſs. Hence infer to the inſtruction and compoſure of your minds, that our future portion depends not on the quality and employment of our laſt hours and days, but on the quality and employment of the whole of our life on earth.

Yes, and this is my leading principle, my general axiom, the beſt uſe, the beſt, moſt conſcientious application of our life on earth, in its whole ſcheme and in all its parts, is the beſt, the only ſafe proviſion and preparation for the happineſs of the life to come. Whoever in the preſent ſtate is and becomes and does, what therein he is able and ought to be and to become and to do, will alſo be and become it in the future; whoever here ſhall climb the aſcent of moral perfection to a certain point, or becomes good and virtuous to a certain degree, the ſame will there aſcend to a proportionate degree of happineſs. This is a neceſſary reſult of the general obſervations, which we have propounded to you for the rectification of the vulgar notions concerning the happineſs of the future life. We now proceed, by a cloſer application of them, to ſhew how we may beſt prepare and fit ourſelves for it.

If firſt the happineſs of the life to come is to be adapted to the human nature in general, and to the nature of every individual perſon in particular: then ſhun on one hand whatever leſſens, degrades, diſgraces the human nature; whatever diveſts the man of his dignity and levels him with the beaſts of the field. Shun therefore error, ſin, vice, ſenſuality, levity, heedleſſneſs, the thraldom of the luſts and paſſions. Think, ſay, do nothing, of which a man need be aſhamed before himſelf and before the wiſeſt and beſt of his fellow-creatures. And addict yourſelf on the other hand to whatever may elevate, dignify, perfect your nature; endeavour to give it all the advantages and accompliſhments, whereof it is capable. Strive after knowledge and wiſdom, after virtue and piety, and ſtrive after them more than after riches and honour, than after power and authority, than after all extrinſic earthly goods. Unfold therefore and exerciſe your intellectual powers. I mean not to ſay, that to the neglect of the duties of your calling you ſhould acquire extenſive erudition. The greater part of what bears that name will and muſt evaporate in the future ſtate as utterly unſerviceable. Only the method in which we have acquired it, or the degree in which by its means we are become more intelligent and wiſe, procures an abiding utility. We are to become intelligent and wiſe, and this we may be by buſineſs as well as by literature, if we purſue both the one and the other with reflection, with conſideration, with conſciouſneſs of ſelf, with regard to their

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reaſons and combinations and conſequences. If ye therefore here, by whatever means, learn to comprehend, to ſurvey, to compare more objects, to judge of them more juſtly and quickly, to chuſe between them more poſitively, to manage them better and employ them more ſkilfully: then, let the things that teach you this, be and be called as they may, they will thereby render you capable of a ſuperior ſtate, and of a more ſucceſsful application of your mental faculties in it. Uſe at the ſame time unremitted exerciſe in virtue. Refine, confirm your taſte for whatever is true and beautiful and good and will abide for ever. Set your affections on the beſt, the worthieſt objects; objects that always, here and there, in the preſent and in the future world, retain their value. Learn continually to gain a completer maſtery over yourſelf and your ſenſual appetites, and to become daily more independent on outward, viſible things; learn to hearken to God and his will with ever greater willingneſs and joy, learn to ſeek and to find in the diſcharge of your duty, in acts of juſtice and mercy, ever greater ſatisfaction; learn to be more and more reſolute and immovable in thinking and acting upon ſound and generous principles; open the avenues of your heart continually more to the motives and demands of charity, of the love of God and of mankind, and let a continually completer harmony prevail between your thoughts, ſentiments, actions, efforts and deſigns. Thus will ye render yourſelves fit to paſs over into a ſtate, where

human nature will appear in its native dignity, and wiſdom and virtue and pure undiſſembled love univerſally prevail.

If farther the happineſs of the life to come will be analogous to the quality of the preſent; a conſequence, an onward continuance of the perfection already here acquired, of the felicity already here enjoyed: this life then ſhould be of real importance to you, and the beſt, the worthieſt uſe of it your grand concern. Nothing of all that you here conceive and do, ſhould be abſolutely indifferent to you, becauſe nothing is unattended by ſome conſequences in futurity. Inſtead of thinking like the careleſs and wanton only on the preſent moment, and exiſting and living in the preſent moment, you ſhould always keep the future in view, and let it have more or leſs influence on all your reſolutions, on the whole of your carriage and deportment. If the former content themſelves with aſking: Will that which I now purpoſe and do, bring me preſent pleaſure or pain, profit or loſs? Will it be approved or cenſured by this or that ſet of perſons? You ſhould occaſionally be occupied with the more important queſtions: How ſhall I hereafter in a ſuperior ſtate behold and judge of this matter, this tranſaction, this enjoyment? Will the recollection of it then refreſh or trouble me? Will it then draw beneficial or injurious conſequences upon me? Will it likewiſe there redound to my honour and procure me felicity, where the prejudices of this terreſtrial life are no longer of any avail

avail and only wiſdom and virtue are eſteemed and honoured? Would ye therefore prepare yourſelves for the happineſs of the future life: acquire by the beſt uſe of the preſent as much capacity, as much foundation, as much matter for it, as ye poſſibly can. Lay up for yourſelves, as the ſcripture has it, treaſures for futurity, good diſpoſitions, good habitudes, good works, that ye may take with you into the grave and into eternity, and which ye can there employ, confirm, proſecute, augment. Make it an inviolable law to you, to think nothing, to ſay nothing, to do nothing here, of which you muſt there be aſhamed, and to omit nothing, to tranſact nothing careleſsly and negligently, that promiſes you afterwards ſatisfaction and joy. So think and live here, as that ye may hope to continue the ſame way of thinking and living in a ſuperior ſtate without incurring ſhame and confuſion, and to be happy in ſo doing.

Has thirdly the happineſs of the future life very numerous ſteps and degrees, and will it be ever gradually increaſing: let that inflame you with a noble ardour for ever higher perfection, for the higheſt degree of perfection of which ye are capable. Content not yourſelves as chriſtians, who are called to immortality, and who, as our text ſpeaks, ſhould by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for glory and honour and immortality, by no means content yourſelves as ſuch, with what is vulgarly called virtue and piety, not with a ſimply honeſt conduct, free from groſs iniquities, an inoffenſive behaviour now and then

then marked with a few good and humane actions. It is not chriſtian humility and modeſty, but culpable indolence and meanneſs, that ſo often attempts to perſuade you, that you have already done ſufficient, and have gone quite far enough for eſcaping the puniſhments of the world to come, and for giving you reaſon to expect one of the lowermoſt ſituations in the felicity of heaven. He who entertains ſuch thoughts and ſentiments, is not fit for the ſociety, for the converſe of the noble, the wiſe, and good, who are gathered to Jeſus, the model and exemplar of human perfection, and in their ever greater reſemblance to him ſeek their glory and their felicity. Would ye become capable and partakers of that happineſs; ſet no arbitrary bounds to your endeavours after chriſtian virtue and perfection. Never deem yourſelves intelligent, wiſe, good, pious enough. Never think ye have worked enough, ſtruggled enough, done enough, for being ſecure of the glorious, unfading prize, which chriſtianity holds out before you. He alone obtains that prize, who, like the apoſtle Paul, forgetting thoſe things that are behind, preſſes forward with unabated ardour for that radiant gem, which ſparkles before him at the end of his courſe. He alone is crowned, who ſuſtains the conflict and continues faithful to the end. He alone can reaſonably hope to proceed in that better life from one ſtage of perfection and happineſs to another, who has here unremittedly and indefatigably laboured to become ever wiſer, ever better, and continually more apt and expert in all

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good. Not a ſtep that ye make here on the road of virtue and piety is for nought, but every one that from indolence and attachment to ſenſuality ye neglect to make, is attended with loſs, loſs irreparable and infinite. Your preſent ſowing and your future harveſt are ſtrictly analogous. Sow here plenteouſly, if ye would reap plenteouſly there. Be never liſtleſs, never weary in well doing, if ye would hereafter enjoy your fill of good.

Will fourthly the happineſs of the future world conſiſt in a greater and nobler activity, and does that activity conſtitute the real proper life of the human as well as of every other intellect: how can ye better and otherwiſe prepare and fit yourſelves for it, than by now exerting and applying your intellectual faculties agreeably to their deſtination, and by learning to exert and apply them progreſſively better, more dextrouſly, more ſurely? How elſe but by leading at preſent a truly active life, induſtrious for the general welfare? Would ye therefore become capable and partakers of the felicity of heaven: avoid all indolence, all liſtleſſneſs in the diſcharge of your duty and in the practice of virtue, all intentional diſuſe, or negligent uſe of your capacities and powers. Bury no talent, no gift which God has delivered to you for the benefit of his children on earth, but put it out to uſe, and diſpoſe of it for the intereſt of your brethren. Seek not your happineſs in indolent repoſe, in enjoyment obtained without labour and pains. Never decline the exertion

exertion of your faculties, and ſometimes even to fatigue, to ſatisfy the demands of duty and humanity. Be never weary in acts of juſtice and mercy, though you ſhould not immediately reap thoſe fruits from them which you had reaſon to expect. Let every lawful and proper exerciſe of your faculties be already as exerciſe important and agreeable to you, without regard to what you now undertake or accompliſh by it. Though you here perform little or nothing by it, yet you have thus rendered yourſelf fitter for greater affairs, for more important tranſactions in the future world. — Make therefore always the beſt uſe of your ſeveral capacities and powers, gifts and acquirements. Study continually how better to apply them to the ends for which they were given you by God. Alleviate and dignify your employment of them continually more and more, by conſidering yourſelves as the ſubjects of God, as inſtruments in his hands, as means whereby he executes his all involving decrees, and promotes the benefit of all his creatures and children in heaven and on earth. — — Study here, in the firſt place of your education and diſcipline, to do the will of God and to do it no leſs willingly and cheerfully than immediately and without reply, if ye would hereafter be fit to execute his beheſts, in other provinces of his domain, and in the execution of them to enjoy felicity. Learn at preſent to revere the ordinances and diſpenſations of your father in heaven as righteous and expedient, and dutifully

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to reſign yourſelves to his guidance and direction, if ye would afterwards perceive and feel the wiſdom and tenderneſs of his proceedings, and exult therein. Fill worthily the lower ſtation, the inconſiderable poſt ye here occupy, if ye wiſh to be there promoted to higher ſtations, to more important offices. Be diligent and indefatigable in the performance of the taſk that is here aſſigned you; tranſact all the affairs of the ſtation and calling, in which providence has placed you with conſcientiouſneſs and aſſiduity; manage all the goods and endowments, that are here committed to your truſt, with inviolable fidelity, if ye would hereafter as faithful ſtewards of the manifold gifts of God be entruſted with more, if ye would hereafter be employed in greater matters, in more important affairs. Exerciſe yourſelves in ſhort now with unabated diligence, in ſerving and aſſiſting every one according to your ability, in thinking and acting diſintereſtedly and generouſly, in readily and zealouſly promoting truth and virtue, religion and piety, in diffuſing around you refreſhment and comfort, ſatisfaction and joy, in contributing as much as poſſible to the mitigation of human miſery and to the augmentation of human happineſs, if ye would hereafter enjoy the raviſhing delight, of doing the ſame in a more exalted ſphere, and to a father extent.

We told you fifthly, my pious hearers, that the happineſs of the world to come will be enjoyed by numbers together and be a ſocial ſtate; and this may

may alſo teach us how we ſhould prepare and capacitate ourſelves for the enjoyment of it. Are we to be fit companions for the wiſe and good, the votaries of God and Jeſus; are we to enjoy pleaſure and felicity in their ſociety: we ourſelves muſt be, at leaſt as novices, wiſe, good, and ſincere votaries of God and Jeſus; we muſt know how to prize and to avail ourſelves of the advantage of ſuch intercourſe and ſuch company. The ſame ſocial virtues, which here render our connections and converſe with our fellow-creatures agreeable and profitable, we ſhall alſo want there. The ſame ſentiments and affections, which draw us together here, unite us alſo there. There as here muſt eſteem, benevolence, love, cordiality and tender ſympathy accompany us to our brethren and actuate us in our intercourſe with them. There as here muſt our hearts be reciprocally open to each other, and mutually correſpond without diſguiſe and falſehood, if we would be happy in each other. There as here would envy, jealouſy, vanity, pride, ſelfiſhneſs render us totally incapable of this felicity. Would you therefore previouſly ſecure it, my dear friends, exerciſe yourſelves even now in all thoſe virtues, and ſtrive to render them more and more habitual. Cleanſe your hearts more and more from all ſelfiſh, mean and ſordid ſentiments and affections. Expand them more and more to a general, undiſſembled, unenvious, active humanity. Learn more and more to ſeparate the man from outward, accidental contin-

gences, from the light and the ſhade which height and lowneſs caſt upon them, and to eſteem and love them as human beings, as the future partakers of your immortality. Take a real intereſt in whatever relates to others. Be not totally indifferent to any thing that concerns them as men, as brethren, to what men, what brethren do or ſuffer or enjoy. Rejoice in all the beautiful and good that is in and among mankind, and is effectuated by them. Look not, as the apoſtle ſays, every man ſimply on his own concerns, but alſo on the concerns of others. Learn more and more willingly and generouſly to give, and more and more gratefully and joyfully to receive. This will both here and hereafter procure you acceſs to the boſoms of all the wiſe and good, of all good chriſtians, and capacitate you for the complete enjoyment of that felicity, which flows from mutual, pure and generous love.

SERMON LVII.

The Advantages of our Knowledge in the future Life.

GOD, thou haſt endowed us, as rational creatures, as beings cloathed with thy likeneſs, with a capacity for perceiving truth and for advancing progreſſively farther in the knowledge of it. Thou haſt revealed thyſelf to us both in nature and in ſcripture, and vouchſafed us various means of information and inſtruction. Thanks be to thee, our creator and father, for the manifold and glorious diſtinctions with which thou haſt favoured us! Thankſgiving and praiſe be particularly rendered to thee, for that we are able to ſoar in thought to thee, the primordial fount of truth, for that we can conceive of thee and have communion with thee, the conſummately perfect intelligence, the father of ſpirits. Though all the knowledge we can here acquire, is extremely defective and imperfect, it is nevertheleſs ſufficient to lead us ſafely on the road of life, and to calm our minds amidſt the difficulties and dangers of it. And what great improvement, what enlargement, what farther growth of it does thy parental tenderneſs not allow us to hope for in a ſuperior ſtate! What light will then diſpel the preſent

preſent darkneſs! What a brilliant day ſucceed that night, in which we are now involved! Oh let this exalted hope inſpire us with courage and reſolution, whenever we begin to feel the aggravation of that darkneſs, and the horrors of this night. Teach us carefully to employ every ray of that light which at preſent thou cauſeſt to ſhine upon us, and by the brightneſs of it to purſue our way with confidence and joy, and not come ſhort of the glorious prize. To know the truth and to follow as it leads, be that at preſent and for ever our unremitted aim, our greateſt glory! Bleſs in the abundance of thy grace the meditations that are now to occupy our minds. Let them raiſe our affections above the attraction of things viſible, and fix them on the unſeen and eternal world. For this we pray thee in the name of our lord and ſaviour Jeſus Chriſt, in whom we have boldneſs and acceſs with confidence, as his votaries, unto thy gracious throne, and addreſs thee further in his words: Our father, &c.

I CORINTH. xiii. 12.

For now we ſee through a glaſs darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then ſhall I know even as alſo I am known.

HOWEVER impoſſible it may be, as I recently took occaſion to obſerve, for us to form any adequate notions concerning the happineſs of the future

future life: we may however, my pious hearers, greatly extend and rectify our more general ideas of it. We may form analogies between our preſent and future ſtate, and, by ſeparating the imperfections and frailties inherent in the former, from the latter, gain ſome conception of ſeveral of its advantages and felicities. This we can do more eſpecially in regard to our knowledge and to our virtue, or our moral perfection; concerning which in the future life the holy ſcriptures are abundantly explicit. And both, knowledge and virtue, conſtitute a no leſs important than eſſential part of all human happineſs, nay indeed of the happineſs of all intelligent beings. We will at this time confine ourſelves to the former of theſe two particulars.

Knowledge is even at preſent an eſſential prerogative of man over all the ſubordinate creatures of the earth; is even at preſent the link that connects him with the inviſible, with the ſpiritual world, that connects him with the deity, and renders him capable of communication with them. It already now ſets all his faculties and energies in motion, impels him to various enterpriſes and actions, and diſcloſes to him numberleſs ſources of pleaſure, no leſs pure than inexhauſtible. It is the foundation of all his activity, the proper ſource of his happineſs. To know, to will, to do, to enjoy, are inſeparably connected as cauſes and effects. All the alterations and improvements in regard to our knowledge that we may preſume to expect, allow us likewiſe to expect proportionate

tionate alterations and improvements in regard to our activity. In regard to the former the doctrine of chriſtianity unfolds to us the moſt glorious proſpects.

Now, ſays the apoſtle in our text, we ſee through a glaſs darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then ſhall I know even as alſo I am known. That is: Here our knowledge is rather a repreſentation of ſigns and figures, than knowledge of the real ſubject matter: there it will be more apparent. Here we have only very defective and incomplete ideas: there they will be far more perfect, and we ſhall comprehend more the aggregate of objects and with clearer perceptions, than we here can do. Therefore our knowledge in the future life will have greatly the advantage over that which we can poſſeſs and acquire in the preſent. This is the apoſtle's main poſition. Let us examine it nearer, and as we proceed in our reflections reduce it to its primitive parts.

What then are the greateſt, the moſt eſſential advantages of our knowledge? What conſtitutes its proper perfection? What is here wanting to it for attaining to that perfection, and what may we hope to gain in that reſpect in a ſuperior ſtate? The more comprehenſive, the more perſpicuous, the more ſolid, the more certain, the more important and liberal, the more lively and active our knowledge: the more perfect it is. This is the ſtandard of its defects and its advantages, its perfection and

its imperfection both in the preſent and in the future world. According to this ſtandard let us compare the preſent with the future, and from that which we are now, with modeſty, but alſo with aſſurance, conclude concerning what we ſhall hereafter be.

Now our knowledge is much confined. It comprehends only a few objects, and even of thoſe few objects only a few detached parts. Our ſphere of viſion like that of our comprehenſion is very contracted. It is true, we can with our eyes, and ſtill more with our intellect, ſoar far above this ball of earth, we can aſcend to ſtars, to ſuns and worlds, which revolve their appointed courſes at a prodigious diſtance from the place of our abode; and this may ſurely be conſidered as a preſage and pledge of our future grandeur. But, what know we of theſe ſuns and worlds, of their revolutions and cataſtrophes, of their deſignations and combinations with the whole? What know we with any accuracy that may be relied on, except their exiſtence and the probable computation of the magnitude and diſtance of ſome of theſe orbs? And what are all theſe ſuns and worlds, vaſt and innumerable as the hoſt of them may be, in compariſon of thoſe, from which never yet one ray of light has viſited our eyes, nor of which a thought has ever entered our minds? Is not the far greater part of the immenſe creation entirely concealed from our view? Are not moſt of the works and ways of the Infinite,

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in particulars as well as in generals, in the material as in the ſpiritual world, perfectly unknown to us? Is not all that we know, as nothing in compariſon of what we do not know? Is not all our knowledge, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, piecemeal, in ſcraps, in parts broke off from aggregates, from figures and images, and ſometimes oddly put together? Nothing but little fragments, of which ſome few may perhaps belong to the temple of truth, but the generality to the ſpecious, intricate, mazy fabric of error and deceit? What is it elſe but ſingle letters, of which we are ſeldom able to compoſe a few ſyllables, ſtill ſeldomer whole words, and ſeldomeſt of all determinate propoſitions? This imperfection of our preſent knowledge is in the future life to give way to a greater perfection. When that which is perfect is come, ſays the apoſtle, then that which is in part ſhall be done away. What may we not hence expect! How greatly ſhall our view and our comprehenſion be enlarged from everlaſting to everlaſting! How many more objects ſhall we then be able with one glance of the mind to comprehend, to combine, to compare; what totally different ſeries and reſults of repreſentations and ideas, of concluſions and axioms, to aſſociate and ſurvey in the whole of their combination! What new and immenſe theatres of divine wiſdom and power may we not hope gradually to enter in his infinite domain, and to viſit them as ſchools for our inquiſitive mind ever thirſting after higher attainments in knowledge!

What bounds ſhall we there preſume to fix to the conſummate wiſdom and benignity of the father of ſpirits! What ſummits of perfection may not creatures who are capable of ever higher aſcents in perfection gradually reach! What treaſures of the knowledge of the truth may they not amaſs, and with which they may accumulate ſtill larger ſtores, beyond all meaſure and degree!

To proceed, now is our knowledge ſurrounded with very numerous and moſtly impenetrable obſcurities. Here and there the inquirer after truth is refreſhed and cheered in his reſearches by ſome faint ray of light, but how quickly like a meteor is it gone, as if it only appeared to render him more ſenſible to the darkneſs that uſually ſurrounds him! Where can we dart a look with the bodily or with the mental eye, without diſcovering myſtery, inſcrutable myſtery, or ſtriking on an abyſs, where our reaſon is loſt, and at which our imagination ſtands aghaſt! Is not all nature, are we not ourſelves a myſtery which the underſtanding in vain endeavours to unravel? Is there a motion of our body, is there an operation of our mind, is there a revolution in the viſible or in the inviſible world which we can thoroughly comprehend, fully explain and trace up to its firſt principle and cauſe? Clouds of airy fantoms flit around us, which we ſcarcely know how to diſtinguiſh and ſtill leſs to retain. Is not the interior, the eſſence of objects, the moſt common as well as the moſt extraordinary, the

neareſt

neareſt as well as the remoteſt, utterly concealed from our eyes? Is it not ſimply their outward form, or ſome few of their properties and effects, of their habitudes, that we can perceive and comprehend? And what are all our conceptions and ideas of God, the firſt, the greateſt, the eſſentially perfect being? What know we concerning his mode of exiſtence and of acting, his infinite intelligence and his infinite power, his all-comprehending views, and his immenſely great and glorious works? Adore him, the Eternal, the Incomprehenſible, the Only, proſtrate yourſelves in the duſt before him, be abſorbed in the ſentiment of his infinite majeſty, and acknowledge that he dwells in inacceſſible light. Yes, here we ſee through a glaſs darkly. Only faint, confuſed forms and figures preſent themſelves to our eyes and to our mind, but not the real objects. Our knowledge conſiſts more in words than in facts, more in ſigns than in the things ſignified. But then, continues the apoſtle, face to face. This, my dear friends, allows us to hope for a far greater portion of light, of perſpicuity, of preciſion in the future life; a far more experimental, manifeſt, leſs figurative and ſymbolical knowledge, than we now poſſeſs. We cannot indeed in the ſtrict import of the expreſſion ſee God face to face; his ſupreme and conſummately perfect nature will ever remain unſearchable to us; we ſhall never indeed be able thoroughly to ſound the eſſence of all other objects: we ſhall however ſee more into their real, peculiar

quality, more of their energies and effects, of their combination and their aſſociation with the whole; always however more and clearer traces of the glory of God in his works; always however more intimately feel and always more manifeſtly perceive his exiſtence, his preſence and his power; ſee however the Inviſible in his image and repreſentative Jeſus Chriſt, and through him become capable of an always progreſſively greater, clearer light. Here we walk by faith: there by ſight. Here we are ſurrounded by clouds and thick darkneſs: there we ſhall hail the orient morn, which will gradually brighten into meridian ſplendour. Now we cannot indeed deſcribe that morn, that day, any more than we ſhould be able to ſuſtain its light: but that after the darkneſs of the night we are cheered by the light of the morning and the ſplendour of the day, we know full well; and this gives us room to hope for and expect in futurity, more than at preſent we are able to conceive and comprehend.

Our knowledge will thirdly in the future life be much more ſolid and ſubſtantial, than at preſent it is and can be. Indeed with the natural appetence for knowledge of the truth and its concomitant love of truth, we connect a certain ſenſe for it, as well for that which ariſes from ſenſation and experience, as for that which is derived by inferences from principles and obſervations. Our ſenſes, our reaſon and the various information that we receive of other objects and perſons, the revelations of God both

both in nature and in ſcripture, are ſo many means, the diligent uſe whereof may lead us to the track of truth, may help us to a knowledge adapted to our preſent wants and circumſtances. But notwithſtanding this, even with inflexible induſtry and the greateſt exertion of our faculties, we cannot advance far in this knowledge. The majority of it conſiſts in falſe and erroneous, or in partly true and extremely defective conceptions and ideas. Senſation and illuſion, reality and appearance, form and ſubſtance, truth and error border in our underſtanding ſo cloſely on each other, run ſo often and at times in ſo extraordinary and ſpecious a manner into one another, and are not unfrequently ſo intimately connected and implicated together, that we are unable either to ſeparate them at all, or without peril of loſing the truth at the ſame time with the error. Here both the wiſe and the unwiſe, the learned and the unlearned, muſt unanimouſly confeſs: we all err in various ways. As there is no one on earth who does good and ſins not, ſo neither is there any one who knows the truth and is free from error. The more limited and obſcure our knowledge is; the fewer objects we can comprehend and compare at once, and on the fewer ſides we are able to view and contemplate them: the oftener muſt we err in paſſing judgment on them. And how often are we impeded by animal wants, bodily infirmities, the various occupations and cares of this terreſtrial life, in purſuing the traces of truth, and prevented from

from advancing ſo far in reflection and reſearch, as we otherwiſe might, and perhaps have an eager deſire to do! How often is the way to the temple of truth obſtructed, how often cloſed againſt us by the prejudices of education, of rank, of example; how often by vanity, pride, the fear of man, partiality, bigotry and other ungovernable paſſions! How often by all in their turns are we led into the moſt prepoſterous errors! — And does not the greater part of our preſent knowledge conſiſt entirely of conjectures? How ſmall is the number of propoſitions that are completely demonſtrated and placed beyond reach of any reaſonable objection, in compariſon of the countleſs multitude of thoſe, that have only ſome, greater or leſs, probability in their favour! Where is the friend, the ſeeker of truth who has not frequently had to contend with a formidable hoſt of doubts and difficulties! Where is the friend, where the ſeeker of truth, whom it has not totally deſerted for many hours and moments of his life, and abandoned him to the oppreſſive ſentiment of his ignorance and imbecillity? What truth is free from all obſcurity and difficulty? What evidence of truth that cannot be ſhaken by ſome reply, by ſome objection? — Such are the imperfections of our preſent knowledge, which we may confidently hope will be removed or diminiſhed in the future life. Moſt of theſe imperfections have their deeply ſeated cauſe in our preſent ſtate, in the various limitations and wants of this temporal life, in the frailties

ties and defects of our organs of ſenſe and our body of duſt, in the exhauſtion that immediately ſucceeds to the exertion of our powers, in the predominance of ſenſuality over reaſon, in the numerous moral failings and tranſgreſſions, in the irregular and violent paſſions to which we are ſtill obnoxious. At the general revolution in all theſe contingences, on the removal of all theſe incumbrances and burdens, which enſues in death and after death, the rational, immortal mind, which has here been ſo often repreſſed by its clogs and reſtrained in its boldeſt flights after light and certainty, may ſecurely rely on having more liberty, more ſtrength, a more unimpeded and continued uſe of its endowments. Many of the coverings in which truth is now veiled from the intellectual eye, will undoubtedly fall off before its acuter, more penetrating ſight. Truth will appear to it more in her native, peculiar form, more in her ſimple eſſence, than as ſhe now appears to her diſciples. Doubtleſs the All-bountiful will not leave us deficient in new means, new organs and informations for leading us on from one truth to another, and from one degree of certainty to another. What may we not expect in a life more ſpiritual than ſenſual, a life where reaſon and virtue will prevail and triumph; what may we not expect from a ſociety compoſed entirely of wiſe and good perſons under the conduct of their captain and lord, in whom are hid all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge!

Our

Our knowledge in the future life will be alſo fourthly much more important and refined, than it is and can be now. How much attention, how much reflection, how much mental application, are we now obliged to waſte on inſignificant objects, on abſolute trifles! How much more are we employed about what belongs to the ſuſtenance of our clay-built tabernacle, to our food and cloathing, to outward propriety, than on what conduces to the ornament and accompliſhment of our mind! How frequently does the former deprive us of time and inclination for the latter! How often does the acquiſition of worldly riches and poſſeſſions prevent us from acquiring ſpiritual and everlaſting treaſures! Is not many a generous, vigorous mind, that is panting after clearer light, after farther knowledge, tied and bound by theſe chains to the earth, and by petty, mean works and occupations hemmed in on all ſides in the uſe and exertion of its eminent endowments! How much more of the extorted and puerile, than of the liberal and manly appears in almoſt all that we here undertake and achieve, that moſt concerns and employs us! We have no need, it is true, to be aſhamed or to complain of this, ſince it is agreeable to our preſent ſtate and a neceſſary means of our firſt education and production. — But we ſhall have occaſion to rejoice in the ſuperior ſtate, where we ſhall be enabled to ſay: when I was a child, I ſpake as a child, I underſtood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man I put away childiſh

childiſh things. Yes, on arriving at that age of manhood, at that more elevated ſtage of our exiſtence we may be aſſured of poſſeſſing more maſculine faculties, and a much more manly uſe of them, more liberal and generous ſentiments, a much riper judgment concerning the worth of objects, a much wiſer choice between them, and a ſeries of action much more conſiſtent with the dignity of a rational being. We ſhall then be occupied about objects more important in themſelves and worthier of us. Exempt from the wants and ſolicitudes of this terreſtrial life, liberated from the weakneſſes and bonds of this frail body, the magnitude, the excellence, the worthineſs of theſe objects, will aſcertain the degree of our curioſity, of our attention, of our reflection and reſearch, and never ſuffer us to be weary in it. God and his conſummate perfection, the multitude and the magnificence of his works, the wiſdom and benignity of his all-comprehending, all-bleſſing ways, the wonders of his love in that œconomy contrived through Jeſus for the happineſs of mankind, the dominion and authority of this our great captain and leader, the coherence of human events, the ſolution of ſo many at preſent inexplicable enigmas in nature and in the divine adminiſtration: ſuch will be the grand, the ſublime objects of our heightened knowledge; and they unqueſtionably compriſe all that is important and noble, and worthy the employment of every faculty of the ſoul.

Laſtly, my pious hearers, theſe ſeveral advantages muſt likewiſe impart more life and efficacy to our knowledge in the future world, than it here commonly has and can have. Our ſoundeſt perceptions, our nobleſt principles, our beſt convictions are oftentimes by worldly occupations and cares, by bodily infirmities and ſufferings, by outward connections and relations, by points of honour and complaiſance, by bad example, by praiſe and cenſure, by intercourſe with fops and fools, much diminiſhed and prevented from having their proper influence on our ſentiments and conduct. What a great gulf is often fixt between our judgment and our heart, between our thoughts and our actions! How ſeldom do even the moſt important truths of religion exert their whole efficacy upon us! How ſeldom are we rendered by them ſo wiſe, ſo good, ſo contented and happy, as we might become by them! — But likewiſe in this reſpect, my dear friends, the imperfect will hereafter give place to the perfect. Truth will then fall into a better ſoil, and therefore more eaſily ſhoot up and thrive and bear fruit. Neither worldly cares nor occupations will choak and cruſh like thorns and ſtones that heavenly plant. A milder climate, a ſerener ſky, a more genial atmoſphere, a more careful nurture, a greater abundance of refreſhing dews will favour its growth and cauſe it to bring forth fruit a hundred and a thouſand fold. Never will our knowledge be extinct, never unpro-

unproductive, never will our reaſon be at variance with our affections, as we think ſo ſhall we act, and do that which we know to be lawful and right.

Such, my pious hearers, is that greater perfection, which we may preſume to expect in regard to our knowledge in the life to which we are haſtening. Be ye joyful in this hope, all you who are enamoured of truth, who are eagerly ſearching for it as for hid treaſures. Your reſearches will aſſuredly not be in vain; your thirſt for it will hereafter be quenched. Let not the darkſome night by which you are now in ſo many reſpects ſurrounded, alarm or perplex you. It will not laſt for ever, it will not much longer continue. Soon will it yield to the cheering dawn, to the bright effulgence of day: and then will every reſtleſs doubt be at once diſpelled, every anxious uncertainty ceaſe, ye will paſs on from faith to ſight, ye will behold many objects which ye now juſt diſcern through the preſent dim and miſty twilight, in all their luſtre, and perfectly diſtinguiſh many others which are now totally concealed from your view, and thereby become progreſſively more active, more perfect, more happy.

SERMON LVIII.

The Advantages of eminent Virtue in the future World.

GOD, in framing us rational and moral creatures, thou haſt made us capable of virtue, and thereby opened to us ſources of happineſs the moſt exuberant and pure. We can diſtinguiſh good from ill, truth from falſhood, and chuſe between both according to principles clearly known. We can propoſe for our model thee, the primordial fount and archetype of all perfection and ſtrive after a progreſſively nearer reſemblance to thee. And on doing this; how it exalts, how it expands both our mind and our heart! What a bleſſed ſentiment it gives us of our dignity, of the true end of our being, of our fellowſhip and connection with thee! But ſtill we often tire in the nobleſt of our exertions, in the ardent purſuit of virtue, of godlike attainments. Still ſometimes we are in want of light, ſometimes of ability, ſometimes of courage and reſolution, to purſue with conſtancy the path which leads to that glorious object. Still moſt of our paces towards it are ſlow and unſteady. The idea of this often troubles us, o God, and penetrates us with a diſtreſſing ſentiment of our weakneſs and frailty. But far be it from us, on that account to ſtand ſtill, or even to turn back to the dark

dark and dangerous road of vice! No, this is our ſtate of diſcipline, here we are to learn the proper uſe of our faculties and to think and act upon the principles of virtue: and then ſhall we hereafter perform more with our well-trained powers, and employ our good aptitudes with leſs moleſtation and greater ſucceſs. This our hope reſts on the infallible ſecurity of thy parental kindneſs; it is built on the expreſs aſſurances of him whom thou haſt ſent us as a teacher and conductor in thy name. Oh grant that this exalted hope may be ever preſent to our mind, and aſſiſt us by it to overcome every obſtacle and difficulty on the paths of duty and virtue. Bleſs to that end our reflections on theſe important doctrines: that they may diffuſe light into our minds and impregnate our hearts with ſincere affection for whatever is right and becoming. We are emboldened to pray to thee for theſe benefits as the votaries of Jeſus, and addreſs thee further in his name: Our father, &c.

1 CORINTH. xiii. 10.

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part ſhall be done away.

WHAT the apoſtle aſſerts in our text in regard to knowledge, may with equal propriety be affirmed concerning virtue. Our virtue at preſent as well as our knowledge, is but a medley of ſcraps, extremely defective, extremely incomplete: when

however that which is perfect is come, when the ſtate of perfection is arrived, then the incoherence ſhall ceaſe. The ſame advantages that we expect to reap in a ſuperior life from the former, from knowledge, we may likewiſe promiſe ourſelves from the latter, from virtue. Virtue no leſs eſſentially and in ſome ſort more eſſentially pertains to human happineſs than knowledge. The former is far more immutable, far more ſelf-ſubſiſtent than the latter. It is as eternal, as immutable as God, as the eternal laws of truth and order. Superior happineſs may far more eaſily be conceived without greater knowledge than without greater virtue. From this the former derives its whole worth: without this it is frequently more prejudicial than profitable, more a ſource of trouble and grief, than of ſatisfaction and pleaſure. — And what is virtue? It is the beſt, the worthieſt application of our ſeveral capacities and powers, of our advantages and endowments; it is the ſteady proſecution of the rules of truth and juſtice, the precepts of order and of moral beauty in all that we think and ſay and do; it is the predominant inclination and the conſtant readineſs to accompliſh every duty, and always to do that which is right and proper and in every inſtance the beſt; it is a temper and diſpoſition thoroughly imbued with love towards God and man, and a conduct in perfect harmony with it. And what are now the advantages of virtue? In what does its perfection conſiſt? The more univerſal; the more voluntary; the

the more pure and generous; the more active and efficacious; the more conſtant and undaunted our virtue: the more perfect it is. In all theſe reſpects will our virtue in the future world have conſiderable advantages over that which we acquire in the preſent ſtate. Let us now proceed to take a nearer view of theſe advantages ariſing from ſuperior virtue in the future world.

The more univerſal therefore firſt our virtue, the more perfect it is. Our virtue is univerſal when it extends to and embraces all that is right and fit, that is agreeable to the will of God and to the laws of truth and perfection. Here, my pious hearers, in the preſent life this univerſality is but too often deficient. Whether it be owing to the want of knowledge and ſagacity, whether to the want of tenderneſs of heart, or whether to outward circumſtances and connections. But too often the difference between what is right and wrong, what is good and better, what in each particular caſe is the beſt, appears to us only in a faint and feeble light; the remoter conſequences of our actions elude our attention; and the laws of ſuperior perfection do not always preſent themſelves to our mind as the paramount principles of our conduct. But too often do we idly and fondly endeavour to unite the demands of our luſts and paſſions with the demands of virtue, and afford the latter no more than a divided, extremely defective obedience, in order that we may indulge the former and ſpare ourſelves the laborious

conflict, without which we can never hope to controul them. But too often example and a variety of fickle circumſtances are of more account with us than the eternal immutable laws of truth and juſtice; we purſue the path of integrity and virtue, only ſo long as we ſee others walk it, and frequently neglect to do much good, becauſe perhaps we muſt do it without example, and therefore be ſtigmatiſed for ſingularity. Thus our virtue remains always partial and incomplete. Thus is it univerſal with but very few. Thus do we often arbitrarily disjoin, what in its very nature is inſeparable. We ſtudy to acquire ſuch or ſuch particular virtues, we exerciſe ourſelves in ſuch or ſuch good ſentiments and actions, we perform ſeveral detached works of juſtice, of equity, of humanity, of piety. One diſtinguiſhes himſelf by his temperance, another by modeſty, a third by beneficence, a fourth by veracity and fidelity, another by diligence and induſtry, but ſeldom is our affection for all that is true and right and proper, and our endeavour to think and act always agreeably to it, as univerſal and unbounded as it ought to be, and as we ourſelves in the calm and retired hours of life ſincerely wiſh that it were. Yes, even the beſt of us is at times ſenſible, that the accompliſhment of every duty is not equally eaſy to him, that he does not practiſe every virtue with the ſame readineſs and aptitude. — The greater however our knowledge, the more juſt our conceptions in the future life; the leſs authority ſenſuality will there

there have over our determinations and actions; the more favourable outward circumſtances and connections will there be to us; the more good and exemplary inſtances of probity that will there encourage and confirm us: the more univerſal will alſo our virtue be. Truth, order, perfection will preſent themſelves to us in a brighter radiance, cauſe us to feel their divine beauty with deeper emotion, and reign over their votaries with unlimited ſway. In the ſociety of the wiſe and good we ſhall certainly not be aſhamed of any kind, generous ſentiment and action, and be indifferent to nothing that promotes human dignity and happineſs, that brings us nearer to the deity. Yes, then ſhall we, agreeably to the precept of the apoſtle, but in a far loftier ſenſe than is poſſible here, think upon all, and ſtrive after all that is conſonant with the laws of rectitude, that relates to purity and innocence of heart and life, that brings us true honour and laſting fame.

The more unaffected and voluntary farther the practice of virtue, the more perfect it is. A quality in which it is but too often defective in this life, even among well-meaning people, among ſuch as ſhew a ſincere deference to her precepts. How long ſometimes do we remain in doubt, how long do we ſometimes heſitate between our private intereſt and the general welfare, between deference for the laws of God and truth and deference for the opinions of mankind, ere we can reſolve upon the good, the

generous action, to which we are ſummoned! How often are we obliged more than once to call up all the motives of duty and religion by which we are incited to it, ere we can feel their efficacy and be animated by them with courage and vigour! How often are we conſtrained to do violence to ourſelves in order to repel the oppoſition ariſing from our indolence, our ſenſual appetites and outward circumſtances! How ſeldom is our obedience to God ſo prompt and cheerful, ſo entirely the produce of affection, as the obedience of good tempered children ſhould be towards the beſt and tendereſt of parents! How ſeldom are we ſo ready to afford relief and aſſiſtance to others, as brethren ſhould be to brethren! Nay, do we not often complain of the difficulties we meet with in the diſcharge of our duty, of the trouble it coſts us to govern ourſelves and to maintain our ſuperiority in contending againſt ſin? Are we not often galled by the ſalutary reſtraints that are laid upon us either as men or as chriſtians? Does not often a ſecret wiſh ariſe within that we could tranſgreſs them with impunity? And what is all this but a want of willingneſs and delight in the practice of virtue! A defect, my pious hearers, ſometimes proceeding from our deficiency in knowledge and ſagacity, ſometimes from bodily defects and infirmities, ſometimes from temporal wants and occupations, ſometimes from the dominion of ſenſuality, ſometimes from the influence of the objects around us. On the removal of theſe

defects

defects in a ſuperior ſtate we may likewiſe hope for the removal of the former. How great muſt our readineſs be there to fulfil every duty and to comply with every gentle or ſtrong incitement to good and generous actions, where all the motives to it offer themſelves to us in the cleareſt light, where neither fatiguing, diſpiriting occupations, nor urgent painful wants draw off our attention from them, where neither vile ſelf-intereſt nor the daſtardly dread of human opinions will induce us to reſiſt their energy; there, where we ſhall behold virtue in all her native and peculiar beauty, and more manifeſtly recognize her irreſiſtible attractions!

The purer thirdly virtue is in its ſources and the more generous in its views and endeavours, the more perfect it is. A perfection, to which in our preſent ſtate we but ſeldom and only in a very limited degree can attain. In this world how feculent are frequently the ſources, how ſelfiſh the views of our good and virtuous actions! How often has a dread of the cenſure or a deſire of the approbation and praiſe of our fellow-creatures; how often has the authority of example and the conſtraint of outward circumſtances; how often has the apprehenſion of preſent or future puniſhments and evils, or the hope of conſiderable advantage and rewards; how often has conſtitution, temper, habit, manners and cuſtoms: how often have theſe ſeveral objects a far greater ſhare in our good reſolutions and actions, than the perception and the conviction, that they

are right and proper, than a reverence for the eternal laws of truth and order, than the love of God and man, than the aſpiration and endeavour after more elevated ſpiritual perfection! Indeed there is no reaſon for being dejected and embarraſſed at this imperfection of our virtue. It is grounded in our preſent ſtate. It is adapted to the ſtate of infancy and education in which we now live. The child is not yet capable of the more generous and liberal ſentiments of the man. He is kept in obedience and trained to duty by different motives from the latter. Fear and hope, honour and ſhame, rewards and puniſhments make ſtronger impreſſions on the thoughtleſs child and the volatile, intemperate youth than all the arguments however weighty, which the ſerious reflecting man diſcovers in the nature and analogies of things. If we do good from duty and obedience, and by frequent repetition gradually learn to love and revere it, we have reached our deſtination on earth, but not our deſtination in the future world. — Even in this reſpect we may hope for higher perfection there. Reſtraint of every kind will give way to the juſt perceptions of our underſtanding, fear of every kind will be caſt out by love. Faith, hope, love remain, ſays the apoſtle in the chapter whence our text is taken, but love is the greateſt, the chiefeſt of all. It is the nobleſt ſpring, the richeſt, moſt fertile ſource of whatever is morally beautiful and good, grand and excellent. It will be the animating principle of all the inhabitants

of

of that better world, and the bleſſed tie that unites them all with God and with each other. Love of all that is right and fit and agreeable to the laws of truth and order; love of God, their ſupreme and conſummately perfect original; love of Jeſus, the pattern of all human perfection; love of mankind their brethren, and of all their fellow-creatures both in heaven and on earth; what fruits of the nobleſt, moſt diſintereſted, magnanimous virtue muſt they beget in a ſociety of wiſe and good perſons, who, far ſuperior to all terreſtrial wants and groveling paſſions, are ſtriving after progreſſively purer and greater perfection! What a dignity muſt this confer upon their virtue! What felicity muſt it cauſe them to enjoy in the practice of it! A felicity, of which we have even now ſome foretaſte, whenever we are ſo fortunate as to do ſome good, ſimply becauſe it is good, and to rejoice in it with all our heart without regard to the benefit connected with it.

The more operative and efficacious fourthly our virtue, the more perfect it is. Juſt conceptions of the underſtanding, approbation of the beautiful and good, complacency and taſte in it, abſolutely form the baſis of real virtue: but only by activity and efficacy does it obtain its exiſtence and its vitality and maintain its dignity. The virtue that conſiſts ſolely in juſt conceptions, in fine ſpeeches, in wiſe ſayings, in which the mind alone and not the heart is occupied, which ſhews itſelf in ſentiments but not in actions, is not deſerving of that name, it is hypo-

criſy

criſy and ſelf-deceit. Even here, in this ſtate of imperfection, genuine chriſtian virtue is active and efficient. It diffuſes warmth and energy as well as light and radiance all around, and always prefers a worthy, generous act, to the beſt, the ſublimeſt ſentiment. But to what narrow bounds are its activity and efficacy here confined! How often is the virtue even of the honeſt and ſincere, prevented by indolence, by the propenſity to ſenſual pleaſures, by the attachment to eaſe and convenience, from operating ſo uniformly, and from doing and promoting ſo much good, as it might and ſhould? How often are our faculties wearied and exhauſted, ere we have performed anything conſiderable with them, and how often are we induced by the premature apprehenſion of exhauſting them, to neglect even that, which we actually were able to perform! How ſeldom are the inclination and performance, purpoſe and execution in uniſon! And how greatly are our beſt efforts and exertions clogged by the contradiction and oppoſition of others, by the want of their aſſiſtance and ſupport, and by numberleſs diſcouraging circumſtances! How often is virtue compelled to keep retired as it were at home, to centre its concerns within, and to live in inactive obſcurity! So many defects and imperfections, the removal whereof we may aſſuredly hope for in the life to come. Delivered from the bonds of this weak and crumbling body; raiſed above animal, earthly wants; ſupplied with more perfect organs; endowed with

greater

greater powers; ſurrounded by wiſe and virtuous beings; enjoying the rewards of righteouſneſs and fidelity; enjoying a life and a happineſs that ſhall know no end; in the nearer ſentiment of the preſence of God and of his vicegerent Jeſus: what inward or outward oppoſition will then be able to impede our virtue in the exertions of all its force and vigour, and in operating as far around and effectuating as much good, as it is poſſible for human virtue to do? And what occaſions, what opportunities, what incitements, what reſources, for ſhewing itſelf progreſſively more active and efficacious, may not that virtue expect from her ſovereign, unfailing patron and rewarder, which has already here maintained its poſt and acted faithfully with the inferior portion of abilities and means entruſted to it! Yes, then will inclination and performance go uniformly together, the conception and the act of goodneſs be inſeparably connected.

The more ſolid and conſiſtent, the more conſtant and intrepid in the laſt place virtue is, the more perfect is it. It is an eſſential property of virtue, to introduce order and conſiſtency between our thoughts, feelings, ſentiments, purſuits and actions, to teach us to be at unity with ourſelves and to ſubmit our will entirely to the will of God, to think and act uniformly upon the ſame juſt and noble principles, and to purſue conſtantly the ſame prize, the prize of perfection, by the ſame path, the path of truth and rectitude. He who is inclined one way to-day and

to-morrow

to-morrow another, to-day loves and does good and to-morrow evil, and lives in perpetual contradiction with himſelf, deceives his own ſoul if he thinks himſelf virtuous. So eſſential to real virtue are patience, fortitude and intrepidity. It is not a tranſient inclination, a mutable and fickle ſentiment, an affair confined to certain detached actions; it is a ſteady habitual principle of mind and heart, a fixed and ruling affection to whatever is right and proper, and a no leſs rooted purpoſe of following the dictates of it. Virtue therefore ſhuns neither pains nor conflict, neither obſtacles nor difficulties. She never thinks ſhe has done enough, but forgetting thoſe things that are behind, is unremittingly preſſing forward to the celeſtial prize that ſparkles before her. To finiſh her courſe, undauntedly to fight out the glorious conflict to which ſhe is called, and by obſtinate diligence in good works to ſtrive after glory and honour and immortality, is her peculiar character and her higheſt ambition. Even the ſincere friend of virtue, however, does not always here on earth ſucceed in coming nearer to this perfection and in maintaining his dignity unimpaired. He does not always come off victorious in the combat between fleſh and ſpirit, between ſenſuality and reaſon. Still his zeal is ſometimes deadened and his powers are exhauſted. Still he not unfrequently trips, and ſometimes falls on a road incumbered with various ſtones of ſtumbling and is not free from hidden ſnares and perils. Still he often meets with oppoſi-

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tion and enemies which he is not always able to overcome. — What advantages may not the virtue of the chriſtian hope for in this reſpect in the world to come! There thoſe enemies are vanquiſhed; thoſe dangers happily eſcaped, the fight is fought, the courſe is finiſhed, practice is become habitude. There, with the infirmities of this body, with the occupations and cares of this life, with the charms and temptations of ſenſuality, with the oppoſition and the ſcorn of the wicked, with the deceptions of error and preſumption, with the authority of human reſpect and human complaiſance by which even the good are ſometimes overawed, with all theſe at the ſame time fall away moſt of the obſtacles and difficulties by which virtue is here ſo frequently checked in her nobleſt efforts and repulſed from her glorious object. There will ſhe be retarded by nothing of all this in her onward career, by nothing be diſheartened and fatigued, but all will inflame her zeal, exalt her courage, reward her fidelity, invigorate her powers, enlarge her ſphere of action, and thus perpetually advance her nearer to perfection. Thus in the language of our text, will that which is in part, in regard likewiſe to our virtue be done away, when that which is perfect is come. Thus will ſhe ſhew herſelf in all her luſtre, in all her energy, and be attended with everlaſting, ever increaſing happineſs.

Ye ſincere and honeſt friends of virtue, exult in that ſuperior ſtage of moral perfection, to which ye may

may hereafter hope to aſcend. What ſometimes more troubles you at preſent than the tedious progreſs, which ye make on the way to this perfection, than the many ſlips and miſtakes, by which ye are retarded in your exertions after that celeſtial object, and are often robbed of the moſt delicious fruits of your toils and endeavours. And what at the ſame time more evidently ſhews your determinate and predominant love for whatever is true and good, than this very concern, and this diſſatisfaction with what ye have already done? — Moderate this grief and let it neither moleſt you in the cheerful enjoyment of life, nor in the inward bliſsful ſentiment of your integrity and virtue. It will not always diſquiet you, that generous ſorrow, the better futurity will relieve you from it, and replace it by confidence and joy. As chriſtians ye ſee before you a ſtate, where moſt of the obſtacles and difficulties which lie at preſent in your way will be removed; where the perſons and the objects that ſurround you, will more encourage you to good than deter you from it, more alleviate than aggravate your duty; where ye will proceed far more rapidly, far more unmoleſtedly from one degree of perfection to another, and thus ever approach nearer to its conſummate original. Conſole yourſelves in this, exult in this, whenever the path of virtue is overcaſt with clouds before you, and every ſtep you advance upon it coſts you toil and conflict. Let that proſpect inſpire you with courage and reſolution, and boldly and joyfully per-

ſevere in a path which infallibly leads you to the object of all your aſpirations and affections. The more ye here exerciſe yourſelves in juſtice and mercy; the more willingly and cheerfully ye here learn to obey God and to do his will; the more diligently ye here regulate your conduct by the laws of truth and order: the better will ye qualify yourſelves for a ſtate, and the greater happineſs will ye enjoy in a ſtate, where truth and order, juſtice and beneficence are the only currency, and the will of the Moſt High will be by all both cordially revered and cheerfully performed.

SERMON LIX.

Our Happineſs depends not ſo much on Externals as on our own Frame and Temper of Mind.

GOD, who art our creator and father, thou wouldſt that we ſhould all be delighted and happy; and thou haſt endowed us with the capacity, the reaſons and means for being ſo; for thou loveſt us all, haſt deſigned none of us for miſery, but all for felicity! However various the circumſtances, in which thou placeſt us; however various the fortunes and events which thou ſuſpendeſt over us: they all tend to our perfection and happineſs! Lord, we acknowledge and revere thy more than parental grace and love, and rejoice together in it here in thy preſence. Yes, it is our own fault alone, if under thy kind care and government, under the care and government of the wiſeſt, tendereſt, moſt affectionate father, we are diſpleaſed and diſcontented! Only of ourſelves, not of thee, have we any right to complain, if we find not the path and walk not the way, that leads to contentment. For thou haſt ſhewn us that path, and rendered our progreſs on it more eaſy and ſmooth than it is to many others of our fellow-creatures. Ah, teach us, compaſſionate

paſſionate God, more and more clearly to perceive this fact, and now that we intend to meditate upon it illumine our minds by the light of truth. Lead us back from our manifold deviations, and aſſiſt us to ſeek and to find contentment, where alone it can be found. Convince us by thy ſpirit, that without wiſdom and virtue no ſolid contentment is attainable, and grant that we may henceforth make the improvement of our heart our moſt important concern. For this we pray thee in firm reliance on the promiſes of thy ſon Jeſus, our ſaviour, and addreſs thee further in his name: Our father, &c.

PROV. iv. 23.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the iſſues of life.

EVERYBODY, my pious hearers, is panting in the purſuit of contentment; and yet few attain the object for which they ſo ardently ſtrive. Why? They run in queſt of this contentment to a diſtance, while it is lying cloſe beſide them. They go in ſearch of it without them, while it has its ſeat in their own heart, and depends entirely on their own temper and ſentiments. — We frequently hear it ſaid: If this or the other alteration were to be wrought in my circumſtances; if I were free from this or that conſtraint, this or that vexation; if I had not to undergo theſe fatigues, to endure theſe troubles,

troubles, had I not theſe proſpects before me, were I not involved in theſe connections; could I but remove this one affliction: I ſhould certainly be content, would willingly ſubmit to every thing elſe, however diſagreeable and troubleſome, would do my duty without a murmur, and rejoice in my life and in God, my creator and father! Nothing is more common, and at the ſame time more natural than ſuch thoughts and wiſhes, with all who live and act more without than within themſelves. They ariſe from the lively ſentiment of ſome preſent want or ſuffering, to which nothing in the mind preſents an overbalance, or even an equipoize. Where is the perſon who has never, who has not more than once thus thought, and annexed his poſſible contentment to ſuch conditions? And yet there is nothing, my dear hearers, nothing that removes us farther from happineſs, or more embarraſſes the acquiſition and enjoyment of ſatisfaction than theſe very thoughts and wiſhes. The reaſon of it is eaſily diſcoverable. While we continue to think thus, we make our contentment to depend on what is without us; we ſeek it without and not within us; the objects that ſurround us, the accidents that befall us, the buſineſs we carry on, the perſons with whom we are connected, the people with whom we have to do, and the affairs we have to tranſact, muſt firſt be differently conſtituted before we can be content. But the generality of outward contingences are abſolutely and totally independent on us. Our moſt ardent

wiſhes

wiſhes cannot alter them. They retain, at one time as at another, their good or bad, to us pleaſing or diſpleaſing qualities. They are and ever remain as they are, and if we either cannot or will not be content, till they become otherwiſe and better according to our mind, we muſt continue to be in moſt caſes for ever diſcontented. No, my dear friends, in this way we can never reach the object we are in purſuit of. It is a turning which will ever lead us farther from it. The object, however, is not therefore unattainable, we are not barred acceſs to it. Follow me, all you that are panting for content; I will point out to you a ſafe, an infallible way to it, and that is the alteration of ourſelves and our habit of thinking. If we learn to think differently, to view, to conſider, to judge, to treat, to uſe things differently: every thing that is without us will wear a quite different aſpect; thus will the troubleſome become eaſy, the diſagreeable agreeable, and even ſorrow itſelf a ſource of joy; thus very often want becomes no longer want, conſtraint no longer conſtraint, and adverſity is converted into proſperity. And this alteration in our way of thinking depends moſt of all things on ourſelves. Over nothing have we greater authority than over our conceptions and ideas: we can either call them up or ſuppreſs them; weaken or ſtrengthen them; we can give them whatever direction and connection we pleaſe. We can by principles, by reflections, by exerciſe and habitude, learn to conceive of numberleſs

matters quite otherwiſe than we have heretofore done. And this, my dear hearers, this is the only ſure road to contentment and happineſs. An antient, long known road, but too little frequented. The wiſe monarch of old recommends it in our text. Keep thy heart with all diligence, ſays he, watch carefully over thy ſentiments and affections, reduce them all to order, ſubject them all to the laws of reaſon and religion; for out of it are the iſſues of life, on that depends the whole of thy happineſs; it depends far more on thy own inward diſpoſition than on the diſpoſition of outward objects. Could I thoroughly convince you of this, my friends, deeply imprint it on your minds in indelible characters, how much eaſier would it be for you to be contented in every condition. For the furtherance of this deſign, we will endeavour to make ourſelves better acquainted with this truth, and try to apply it to ſeveral particular incidents of life. I therefore addreſs myſelf to every one of you: by no means require that outward objects ſhould be changed agreeably to thy wiſhes, but alter thyſelf and thy way of thinking, if thou wouldſt be contented.

Alter therefore firſt thyſelf and thy way of thinking, if thou wouldſt be contented, o thou, who complaineſt of the want of certain worldly poſſeſſions and extrinſic advantages, imagining that nothing would diſturb thy ſatisfaction if thou hadſt theſe goods and advantages. Learn to perceive that they are not abſolutely neceſſary to human happineſs,

that thou mayſt be happy without them; thus will the want of them ceaſe to prevent thee from being content. Thou haſt, for example, o man, thou haſt health, competence, honour, reſpect, intelligence, canſt enjoy the ſatisfactions of beneficence and of ſocial life, but thou haſt no children, no deſcendants, with whom thou couldſt ſhare theſe ſatisfactions, to whom thou couldſt bequeath thy property and leave thy reſpect, in whom and by whom thou couldſt live and act even after thy death, and this, ſayſt thou, renders thy content impoſſible. But, knowſt thou then for certain that thou wouldſt be pleaſed and happy, if thou wert bleſſed with children? Knowſt thou for certain, that they would be healthy, intelligent, docile, obedient, that they would become wiſe, uſeful, virtuous perſons and citizens, that they would cauſe thee joy and not torment thy heart, alleviate and prolong thy life, but not embitter and abridge it? Knowſt thou the poſſible and the future, as God, the ruler of the univerſe, knows them? Underſtandeſt thou, as he does, for what thou art fit, what thou canſt yield and do, what is proper and ſalutary for thee now and for the future? Perhaps he, the Omniſcient, ſees that the children thou wiſheſt for, and which his wiſer providence denies thee, would heap upon thee a load of trouble and miſery, under which thou muſt ſink! Perhaps he, the ſearcher of hearts, knows that thou wouldſt not then ſo faithfully fulfil thy duties, and not be ſo uſeful to ſociety, per-

haps wouldſt be injurious to it! Learn therefore to confeſs and to believe, and for this thou haſt reaſon enough, that the God who governs all things for the beſt, has determined alſo this circumſtance of thy lot according to the wiſeſt, the moſt benign laws, and thereby provided for thy benefit, and for the benefit of thy brethren, ſo will this want no longer oppreſs thee, no longer prevent thee from being content.

Perhaps however the want over which thou ſigheſt as the principal cauſe of thy diſcontent, is of another kind. Thou haſt children, haſt health and abilities, haſt food and raiment for them and for thyſelf, but thou art concerned for their future ſucceſs in the world. Thy deſires, ſayſt thou, are not extravagant, thou haſt no cravings after riches, juſt to be able to ſave and lay by ſomewhat, in order to be free from care, and to be able to look forward with calmneſs and compoſure; and then thou wouldſt certainly be content. But, ſince thou canſt not acquire this, rather begin at once to moderate theſe ſolicitudes and baniſh them from thy breaſt. Call to mind thoſe doctrines of wiſdom and religion, which may convince thee that theſe cares are uſeleſs, fooliſh, unchriſtian, injurious to thyſelf and thy family. Learn to truſt in God, the Almighty, the Supremely Bountiful; leave to him the future, which he alone ſurveys; and cheerfully enjoy and wiſely uſe the preſent, which alone is thine. Conſider, that neither thy proſperity, nor the proſperity

of

of thy children depends on the abundance that thou poſſeſſeſt, and which thou ſhalt leave to them, but on the good pleaſure and the providence of God, who ſees fit, in his infallible wiſdom, that thou ſhouldſt not now poſſeſs, what thou and thy family have no need of till the future arrive.

Alter farther thyſelf and thy way of thinking, if thou wouldſt be content, o thou, who now ſigheſt under certain afflictions and troubles, and thinkeſt that nothing could diſturb thy ſatisfaction, if thou wert only free from theſe afflictions and troubles. Thou haſt, for example, with many inward and outward advantages, an infirm ſtate of health, that allows thee not to be ſo active as thou couldſt wiſh; or thou haſt a ſpouſe that is ſickly and whoſe ſufferings are to thee as thy own. Thou wouldſt willingly, ſayſt thou, conſent to be neither rich nor great, nor lead an idle, luxurious life, if thou couldſt but have the free uſe of thy faculties and more diligently attend to thy buſineſs, if thou wert not obliged to ſee the perſon whom thou loveſt moſt, in a ſuffering condition; if only this circumſtance were removed, thou wouldſt certainly be content. But knowſt thou then aſſuredly, if God accompliſhed this thy wiſh, whether thou ſhouldſt be a gainer or a loſer by it? Knowſt thou aſſuredly, whether thou ſhouldſt then be ſo diſcreet, ſo wiſe, ſo pious; whether then thy propenſity to ſenſual pleaſure, thy ambition after riches and honour, would be ſo moderate; whether the ſentiment of thy dependence on God and the un-

certainty of thy terreſtrial life would operate ſo forcibly upon thee? Knowſt thou aſſuredly whether thy more robuſt and confirmed health, or that of thy ſpouſe would not beguile thee into levity and forgetfulneſs of God, intangle thee in a round of vain diſſipations and amuſements, pernicious to thy immortal ſoul, by removing thee ever farther from thy perfection and happineſs? Only learn therefore to think differently, to think juſtly of the afflictions that oppreſs thee; learn to hold them for what they really are and under the government of a ſupremely wiſe and ſupremely bountiful God they muſt neceſſarily be, for a reſtraint, that probably ſecures thee from numberleſs ſins and follies, for a ſalutary, parental admonition of what thou art and what thou art deſigned to be, for a method of diſcipline and exerciſe, for an opportunity and a call to fit thyſelf for ſuperior felicities in the future life, by a purer, a more guarded virtue: and if thou thus repreſent it to thyſelf, it will no longer be an obſtruction to contentment.

Alter thirdly thyſelf and thy own temper of mind, if thou wouldſt be contented, o thou, who now only complaineſt, that thou occupieſt this and no other place in human ſociety, that this and no other, no greater ſphere of operation, is aſſigned thee, that thou art obliged to employ thyſelf in ſuch and no other matters. Thou art therefore, ſayſt thou, content with thy pecuniary circumſtances, with thy domeſtic connections, with thy proportion

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of bodily and mental powers; but thou haſt an office, purſueſt a mode of life, filleſt a poſt, which is not to thy taſte, not agreeable to thy inclination, not adequate to thy abilities. If I could only, thinkeſt thou, occupy a more important office, lead a more dignified manner of life, fill a poſt more worthy of me, how ſedulouſly ſhould I then diſcharge my truſt, how public-ſpiritedly ſhould I think and act, how much good ſhould I do, how contented ſhould I be! But is it then certain that this would be the conſequence? Knowſt thou thyſelf ſo thoroughly, canſt thou ſo poſitively aſcertain the meaſure of thy faculties and the degree of thy probity and virtue, as not to need being under any apprehenſions of thinking differently and being differently diſpoſed in different circumſtances? Is it indeed probable, that, if the ſphere of thy operation were enlarged, thou wouldſt do more good, ſince the inferior portion of good that at preſent thou canſt do, thou either doſt not at all, or only by halves and with reluctance? Do firſt the good thou canſt at preſent do, and do it cheerfully, if thou wouldſt have it believed that thou wouldſt fain do more good! — And then, knowſt thou better than the Omniſcient, what place thou ſhouldſt occupy in his dominion, how and where and by what means thou canſt beſt advance his deſigns and the benefit of thy brethren? Do we not all ſerve the ſame Lord and Father in heaven? Is it not he who has preſcribed to us all our taſk on earth? Does he require

quire more of us, than that we ſhould willingly and faithfully perform what he calls us to do? Can that ever degrade us, ever be unworthy of us, if we do and effect nothing beſides what the creator wills that we ſhould do and effect in his world, whether it be, according to our notions, important or unimportant, of greater or ſmaller influence on the whole? And does thy perfection and happineſs in the preſent and in the future world, depend on what thou doſt, and not rather on the manner how thou doſt it? Learn therefore, o man, learn only to conſider the office thou haſt, the manner of life thou leadeſt, the poſt thou occupieſt, as a wiſe arrangement of God, and thyſelf as the miniſter of his providence, the inſtrument by which he executes his will on earth. Imprint it deeply on thy mind, that every office, if duly adminiſtered, every mode of life if conſcientiouſly purſued, every poſt, if worthily filled, is honourable and noble, that all are equally neceſſary and uſeful to the general welfare, and that far more depends on the fidelity with which that is done which we ought to do, than on the quality and magnitude of what we do. If thou thus properly think of thy ſtation, and conſequently learn to dignify it in thy eyes, it will never be a hinderance to thy contentment, how mean ſoever it may be or ſeem to be.

Alter fourthly thyſelf and thy own way of thinking, if thou wouldſt be content, o thou who complaineſt principally of the particular outward impediments

diments thou meeteſt in the performance of thy duty and the practice of virtue, and which ſo often diſturb thee in the enjoyment of the happineſs connected with it. Thou revereſt, thou loveſt therefore virtue, my chriſtian brother, thy duty is ſacred to thee, thou wiſheſt to perform it entirely, wiſheſt and ſtriveſt ever to become more virtuous, and wouldſt, as thou ſayſt, be perfectly content, if unfavourable outward circumſtances did not render it ſo difficult, or even utterly impoſſible. And what now may theſe circumſtances be? Thou art, for example, connected with perſons, whoſe way of thinking is not agreeable to thine; in thy daily vocation thou haſt moſtly to do with people, to whom religion and duty and virtue are not ſo important as they are to thee, who perhaps deride thy conſcientiouſneſs, thy religion and piety, and often incite thee to wickedneſs, or thou art connected by the ties of blood or of marriage with one who, though not wicked, not particularly addicted to any vice, yet is paſſionate and apt to be angry, who is far more harſh and intemperate in judging and acting than thou art; and thou thinkeſt, if now this perſon were but more gentle, and of a temper more harmonious with thy own, thou ſhouldſt make far greater advances in virtue, and nothing would be wanting to thy content. But wouldſt thou ſo think, if thou ſought content within thee and not without thee, if thou kept thy heart and regulated thyſelf by outward things, inſtead of requiring that they ſhould regulate themſelves by thee?

thee? Wouldſt thou ſo think, if the love of virtue were thoroughly active and predominant in thee, if thou wert entirely animated with the appetency for perfection? Is this wiſh any thing elſe than to ſay, thou wouldſt willingly be patient, if thou hadſt nothing to tempt thee to impatience; wouldſt cheerfully do thy duty, if thou hadſt no oppoſition to encounter; wouldſt fain be virtuous, if the practice of virtue coſt thee nothing; fain be more perfect, if it could but be done without exertion? But what then is patience, not put to the trial and not ſtanding the teſt? What is duty that never impoſes on us the ſlighteſt reſtraint? What is virtue without ſtruggle, without ſacrifice, without ſelf-denial? What is ſtriving after perfection, where there are no obſtacles to ſurmount, no difficulties to conquer? — Learn therefore likewiſe here to alter and correct thyſelf, if thou canſt not alter and correct what is without and around thee. Learn to think and to believe, that virtue is the greateſt, the only permanent advantage of mankind; but that to virtue belongs practice, to practice impediments and reſiſtance; and that the wiſe and good providence of God allows theſe impediments to come in thy way and this reſiſtance to oppoſe thee, not in order to render thee diſpirited and diſcontented, but the more firmly to eſtabliſh thy virtue, to purify it and to bring thee nearer to perfection. Learn to govern thyſelf and to controul thy paſſions, if thou art not able to govern others and to controul their paſſions.

Oppoſe

Oppoſe to their violence chriſtian moderation, to their rage meekneſs. Do thou but walk thy way with firmneſs and confidence, whether it be ſmooth or rough, whether many, or few, or none accompany thee upon it, thou wilt certainly not fail of the prize. If thy companion be remiſs in his duty, do thou fulfil thine. If thy companion be a ſlave to the tranſports of paſſion, be thou jealous of thy liberty and maintain the command of thyſelf. If the former be choleric and impetuous, be thou calm and compoſed, and ever become more ſo. Perhaps thou wilt at laſt gain over thy companion, and even if thou doſt not, yet the effect of it with regard to thee is preciſely the ſame. Thou mayſt rejoice in God and in thyſelf, wilt retain an unſullied conſcience, a tranquil heart, wilt become ever wiſer and better and more confirmed in virtue; and ſhouldſt thou then hold thoſe outward impediments whereof thou complaineſt, for things that render it utterly impoſſible for thee to be content?

Alter laſtly thyſelf and thy own way of thinking, if thou wouldſt be content, o thou who complaineſt only, who art only diſcontented as believing thou art working in vain. No work, it is often ſaid, no labour, were it ever ſo toilſome, no trouble of my ſtation and my calling, were it ever ſo burdenſome, ſhould depreſs me or diſturb my content, if only I worked not in vain, if only my buſineſs and enterpriſes were attended with more ſucceſs, if I only ſaw the good effects of my induſtry, the fruits of my diligence

ligence and fidelity! The want of this is the only thing that troubles me, that often makes me dull and diſpirited. — But is thy complaint well-founded? Doſt thou really labour in vain? Canſt thou ever exert thy faculties without calling forth the faculties of others and more or leſs ſetting them in motion? Do not all things in the world proceed as it were hand in hand; do not all things in numberleſs ways coaleſce together, is not every movement, every concuſſion propagated to infinity? Does what operates in ſilence and concealment operate leſs than that which in its effects ſtrikes the eye and the ear? or canſt thou tell what energies thy activity awakens and excites, what good thy honeſt endeavours to be uſeful to others will effect, here, there, at preſent, in future, during thy lifetime and after thy death? Canſt thou ever ſtrew good ſeed on earth, which under the care of the wiſe ruler of the world will never ſprout up, never bloom and bear fruit? Can any thing in his kingdom, that is uſeful and ſalutary, be loſt, or annihilated? — And even if this were poſſible, if thou wert to labour abſolutely in vain, reſpecting the conſequences, art thou not all the while exerciſing thy faculties? Art thou not learning to uſe them more eaſily and better? Art thou not thus promoting thy perfection? Art thou not thus rendering thyſelf more capable of tranſacting hereafter more important affairs, of undertaking greater things with better ſucceſs and in a more ample ſphere, in a better world? And if thou thus think-

eſt,

eſt; ſeeſt the matter in this light, will ſtill the want of viſible good effects to thy labour, be an obſtacle to thy contentment?

So juſt, ſo important is the leſſon of wiſdom in our text: Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the iſſues of life! So eaſily, ſo certainly ſhould we attain to the poſſeſſion of ſolid, permanent content, if we entirely and conſtantly obſerved this precept! Imprint it then deeply on your memory and your heart, my dear hearers. Apply it to every particular circumſtance of your life. Think continually thus: outward things I can but ſeldom alter to my mind; they are not in my power. But myſelf and my way of thinking I can alter; and on this everything depends, on this depends the whole of my content. The generality of objects are to me ſhat for which I take them. Juſt as my ideas, judgments, appetites, affections alter, ſo do whatever is near and about me alter in my eyes. As I myſelf become wiſer and better, ſo will everything that is without me become leſs burdenſome, leſs clogging, all will aſſume another form. I will therefore conſtantly keep guard over myſelf, conſtantly ſtrive to rectify my ideas and to improve my heart, conſtantly connect the future with the preſent in my mind, never ſeek my perfection out of me but within me; and whatever advances this, whatever makes me wiſer and better, ſhall conſtantly be welcome to me, whether it be plenty or want, ſorrow or joy, aſſiſtance or oppoſition, impediment or alleviation, elevation

vation or abaſement, the proſperous or adverſe turn of my affairs! The way that God calls me to go, the ſtation he appoints me to occupy, the circumſtances in which he places me, will I conſtantly hold to be the beſt, and nothing, nothing ſhall diſturb my content, that by any means brings me nearer to my deſtination!

SERMON LX.

The Holy Communion a Commemoration of Jeſus.

GOD, eternal, inexhauſtible fountain of light, of life, of joy, how exuberant is thy tenderneſs and affection to the children of men! Who can deſcribe the extent of thy loving kindneſs? Who can ſufficiently teſtify his gratitude for thy bounties? Thou haſt created man after thy own image, crowned him with glory, with honour and immortality, and made him little lower than the angels. To know thee, to worſhip thee, to love and to rejoice in thee, and in communion with thee to be perfectly and eternally happy: was and is his ſublime deſtination. And when ſin had drawn us far away from thee and from our deſtination, and had brought us to the brink of perdition, thou ſtill continuedſt ever near us with pardon and aſſiſtance. Thou deſiredſt not the death of the ſinner, but rather that he ſhould turn from his wickedneſs and live. Therefore with ſo much patience and long-ſuffering didſt thou bear with ſinful man, therefore vouchſafedſt him ſo many unmerited bounties and bleſſings, therefore inſtituted ſo many wiſe and gracious proviſions to his amendment and recovery. Therefore at length didſt thou ſend thy ſon Jeſus into the world, and

give us in him the moſt conſummate teacher, the mightieſt deliverer and ſaviour. And now we know the track that leads to happineſs, to thee. Now we may with confidence call thee our father, and promiſe ourſelves more than parental condeſcenſion and lenity from thee. God, what are we, that thou ſhouldſt ſhew thyſelf thus gracious towards us? Might we never be unmindful of theſe demonſtrations of thy condeſcending love! Might the memorial of them be always to us truly important and holy! Might it even now make a thoroughly deep and laſting impreſſion on our ſouls, and penetrate us with the moſt lively ſenſe of thy mercies, with the moſt heartfelt gratitude, with the moſt alert obedience to thee, our infinite benefactor! Bleſs, o God, bleſs to this end the delivery of thy word and the adminiſtration of the holy ſacrament, and let our praiſes and our prayers be acceptable to thee, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, our lord and ſaviour, in whoſe name we further call upon thee, ſaying: Our father, &c.

LUKE xxii. 19.

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them; ſaying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

EXAMPLES of perſons, who have diſtinguiſhed and ſignalized themſelves by generous ſentiments and exploits, by inviolable fidelity in the diſcharge of their obligations, by a life of extraordinary beneficence, by voluntary and magnanimous ſacrifices

fices in behalf of others, have a manifeſt tendency to promote the cauſe of virtue, and to inflame the zeal of its votaries. They generally make a deeper impreſſion on our heart than the wiſeſt precepts; they poſſeſs greater efficacy to move us and to ſet us in action, than the moſt powerful and juſt deductions of reaſon. They not only inform us concerning what is right and becoming, what is beautiful and laudable, but they likewiſe encourage us to copy after ſuch illuſtrious patterns of excellence. They invalidate the force of ſuch objections as we might allege againſt the ſeverity of the precepts, by ſhewing us in a ſenſible and affecting manner, that the obſervance of them is practicable, eaſy, advantageous, that it redounds to the honour of the individual and is attended with happineſs of various kinds. But how apt are the careleſs or thoſe whoſe minds are diſtracted and perplexed by a multiplicity of affairs to loſe ſight of the moſt ſhining models of virtue! How ſoon does the crowd of vulgar, inferior objects, that ſurround them, obliterate all ideas of intellectual, moral beauty from their minds! How neceſſary therefore is it, that we ſhould endeavour by all means to preſerve and to immortalize the memory of ſuch perſons, as have been diſtinguiſhed for their integrity and virtue, and are become patterns for imitation! Let us apply theſe general remarks to the eſpecial occaſion of our preſent meeting.

As chriſtians we have before us an example of virtuous grandeur, that far excels all others. It is the example of Jeſus Chriſt, the founder of our religion,

the greateſt benefactor of mankind. And what an example! It is the example of a perfectly pure and unſpotted virtue; the example of one continued ſeries of generous ſentiments, of great and public ſpirited actions. And yet even we, chriſtians, are ſo prone to loſe ſight of this ſublime example. We ſhould frequently call it to mind, we ſhould aſſociate this recollection with ſolemn circumſtances, if we would uphold the memory of our lord in any conſiderable degree of vivacity and activity amongſt us. He himſelf, our lord, foreſaw our ſloth and negligence, and accordingly prepared us againſt them by the inſtitution of the holy ſupper. As often as his votaries ſhould take this repaſt together, ſo often were they to bind themſelves afreſh to his imitation and his ſervice. The words of our text leave us no room to doubt, that this was the principal, the ſole deſign of Jeſus in the eſtabliſhment of this ſolemn rite. The holy ſupper is a commemorative repaſt inſtituted in honour of Jeſus Chriſt, to the confirmation of our faith and our hope and to our eſtabliſhment in evangelical virtue. This idea we ſhould conſtantly keep in view, if we would attend upon it in a rational manner agreeably to the intention of its founder. We will therefore now proceed to inveſtigate this idea, and to that end conſider, partly of whom we ſhould be reminded by this act of divine worſhip, and partly how this recollection ſhould be conſtituted and what ſentiments and emotions it ought to produce in our boſoms.

Whoſe memory then ought we here thus ſolemnly

to

to renew, my pious hearers? It is the memory of Jeſus Chriſt, the moſt conſummate teacher of truth, the moſt illuſtrious pattern of virtue, the moſt magnanimous friend and benefactor of mankind. Certainly an object worthy of the moſt ſolemn, moſt holy remembrance!

Yes, in Jeſus, whoſe memory ye here ſolemnly celebrate, my chriſtian friends, ye venerate the greateſt teacher of truth, that ever trod the earth, the moſt conſolatory ambaſſador of God, that ever appeared among mortals. Confound him not with the ſages of antiquity, not with the prophets of the jewiſh nation. He was the immediate ambaſſador of the Higheſt, who could ſay of himſelf: All things that I have heard of my father, I have made known unto you. This divine teacher delivers to us no fanciful hypotheſes, he feeds us not with faint probabilities, much leſs is it his purpoſe to delude us with artful plauſible falſhoods. He conceals not his views in abſtruſe, unintelligible terms, not in dark and myſtical images. No, truth, perſpicuity and impreſſion characterize all his ſpeeches, and his diſcourſe is fraught with light, with energy and life. He ſpeaks as one having authority, and not as the ſcribes. And how momentous, how ſoothing were the contents of his doctrine! No idle queſtions of controverſy, no ingenious but unprofitable conceits, which he by his authority and his wiſdom took upon him to decide. His buſineſs was to recover a world lying in wickedneſs, to happineſs and virtue, to adminiſter inſtruction, conſolation

and hope to the deeply fallen race of man. Is it poſſible for a ſinner to be freed from his guilt and condign puniſhment and be reinſtated by an act of indemnity and forgiveneſs in the allegiance of his ſovereign ruler and judge? Is it poſſible to riſe ſuperior to death and the grave and to approach the term of our terreſtrial career without trepidation and horror? What is the worſhip which the creator requires of his creatures? What the methods to obtain his favour? What courſe muſt we take in order to be happy, truly and everlaſtingly happy? Theſe were the important queſtions which could not fail to agitate the minds of the reflecting part of our ſpecies, and which the wiſeſt of the philoſophers could never ſatisfactorily anſwer. He alone who was in the boſom of the Father and the confidant of his decrees, could inform us of his will, of his diſpoſitions, of his purpoſes; and that he does no leſs definitely than authentically. Through him we know the method of obtaining pardon and the forgiveneſs of our ſins, of rejoicing in God and his relations to us, of vanquiſhing the terrors of death and the grave, and of becoming perfectly and eternally happy. He has by his doctrine brought life and immortality to light. He has delivered us from the horror of annihilation and diſcovered to us the faireſt proſpects in a future and better life. Oh praiſe and magnify with me the divine inſtructor, who brought us ſuch glad tidings from heaven. You may firmly rely on his declarations, and ſecurely truſt to his promiſes. He died a martyr

to

to his doctrine. We have here in his ſupper the evident tokens of it. His doctrine is true. He has ſealed it with his blood, confirmed it by the moſt magnanimous death. Yes, for ever ſhall the memory of this ſupereminent teacher of truth flouriſh amongſt us! His doctrine ſhall be the ground of our conſolation, his precepts the rule of our conduct.

In Jeſus, whoſe memory ye here ſolemnize, my chriſtian friends, we revere farther the greateſt promoter and the moſt exalted pattern of virtue. His life was as pure as his doctrine. All his actions preached probity and piety to man. They were all in the moſt beautiful harmony with his ſpeeches and precepts, and his own deportment was the perfect expreſſion of his perfect morality. Accompany him in ſpirit through the ſeveral ſcenes of his life, in the various ſocieties of his contemporaries, in all that he did and ſuffered, every where will ye find the moſt explicit demonſtrations of the innocence, the purity, the virtuous excellence of his character. How rational, how fervent, how ingenuous and confident, how ſtedfaſt and immovable was the piety with which he was actuated towards God, his heavenly father, and which he evinced in all his diſcourſes and actions! And what an univerſal, ſincere, active and efficacious charity animated him in his intercourſe with his brethren, and in every office that he undertook and performed, for their welfare!

And to their welfare tended all that he did. To conſole the diſconſolate, to ſuccour the diſtreſſed, to promote human happineſs, to do good unto all men; theſe were the occupations to which he devoted all his time, all his faculties, and which procured him the pureſt pleaſure. His whole life was one continued ſeries of affectionate aſſiſtances, of uſeful ſervices. Wherever he went, there followed him ſatisfaction and joy, and conſolation and bleſſing were his inſeparable companions. He reſtored the blind to ſight, the dumb to ſpeech, the ſick to health, the inſane to the uſe of reaſon, the dead to life. But ſtill far more was he concerned to inſtruct the ignorant, to correct the erroneous, to reform the vicious, to extend the dominion of truth, of righteouſneſs and virtue, and to advance the perfection and happineſs of the human mind. This was the generous, the exalted aim, which he invariably purſued. In this view he ſubmitted to all the hardſhips and ſorrows of life. In this view he ſhunned neither difficulties nor dangers, neither ingratitude nor inſults, neither ignominy nor pain. In this view he voluntarily ſacrificed himſelf for the common intereſts of mankind. What an exalted character, my dear friends! What a model of virtue! How worthy, that his memory ſhould be tranſmitted and immortalized from one generation of men to another! Yes, for ever extolled among us be the name of this righteous, this holy and juſt one, this

greateſt

greateſt friend of man! Yes, always may his life be the pattern of ours and our reſemblance to him our greateſt glory.

In Jeſus, whoſe memory ye here ſolemnize, you laſtly behold the moſt magnanimous friend and benefactor, the moſt puiſſant deliverer of mankind. Ye revere in him the mediator of the new teſtament, or the new religious œconomy, which God has promulgated by him to the conſolation of mortals. He has proclaimed to mankind on the part of God not only pardon, life and peace, publiſhed to them not only the conditions upon which God offers them theſe bleſſings, but likewiſe meets all the anxieties and doubts that might in this reſpect diſturb their minds. By his mediation he has as it were filled up the immenſe interval that lies between God and us, rendered the deity more conceivable to us, brought us nearer to him, and opened to us free acceſs to the majeſty of heaven. By his death upon the croſs he has aboliſhed the whole ritual of ſacrifices, moſt ſolemnly ratified the promiſes of God, placed his affectionate diſpoſitions to mankind beyond all poſſibility of doubt, and thus freed us from all ſlaviſh, anxious dread of that moſt exalted being. Now we need no longer doubt the readineſs of God, to pardon the repentant and returning ſinner. Now we need not tremble before him as an auſtere maſter and judge, but may with filial boldneſs draw nigh unto him, and find mercy and grace to help in every time of need. Who now,

now, it is written, who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God himſelf that juſtifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us. Now we know under whoſe patronage, we may dare to approach our creator and lord by the tender appellation of Father. In Chriſt, his beloved ſon, we are agreeable to him. In him we have a ſaviour who is able to ſave them to the uttermoſt that come unto God by him. Here, in the holy ſupper, we have the ſolemn earneſt and pledges of all this. This, ſays Jeſus himſelf, this is my blood of the new teſtament which is ſhed for many for the remiſſion of ſins. What a delightful, comfortable memorial, my chriſtian friends! It is the memorial of our pardon and ſalvation through Chriſt. Can we ever forget him, can we ever think on him, without the moſt heartfelt emotion, whilſt we have any love for ourſelves, ſo long as we prefer light to darkneſs, happineſs to miſery, life to death?

And with what ſentiments of admiration, of gratitude, of love, of joy ſhould we not be penetrated at this ſacred memorial! How great the intereſt that our heart ſhould take in it as well as our mind! Yes, admire with me the infinite love of God, the father of men, who has made ſuch wiſe and kind proviſions for the information, the amendment, the pacification and ſalvation of his frail and guilty children upon earth, who gave them his ſon Jeſus,

as

as a teacher, a leader and forerunner, a mediator and ſaviour, and by him has moſt authentically certified them of his kind parental grace and condeſcenſion. Admire with me the unparalleled philanthropy of our lord, and his tranſcendent virtue, and his voluntary and magnanimous death; the love that induced him to ſacrifice all, to endure all, to ſuffer all and at laſt to die upon the croſs for the benefit of mankind. How could you remain unmoved at ſuch love as this? How not be penetrated with the reſentment of love and cordial gratitude to God and his ſon Jeſus? How not be moved to fall down in adoration and exultingly break forth in thoſe ſtrains of the accompliſhed juſt: Worthy is the lamb that was ſlain to receive power and riches and wiſdom and ſtrength and honour and glory and bleſſing. No, indelible diſgrace, everlaſting reproach muſt prey upon our vitals, could we remain cold and inſenſible to theſe inſtances of divine condeſcenſion, were they unable to ſoften our hearts. No, never do you forget, my chriſtian friends, how much, how infinitely much God has wrought in us by his ſon Jeſus; how much, how inexpreſſibly much this Jeſus ſacrificed and ſuffered for us, and what ineſtimable benefits, what manifold, ſpiritual and celeſtial bleſſings we are indebted to him for. Acknowledge with ſenſibility the exceeding great worth of theſe benefits and bleſſings, the worth of that light, that conſolation, that energy to good, that hope and aſſurance, which he ſo dearly purchaſed and has imparted

imparted to you. Place them before your mind in all their extent, in all their bliſsful effects and tendencies. Deeply conſider what ye would have been without the help of this mighty deliverer, and what by him ye are and may yet hope to become. Bring hither to him at his table your common ſacrifice of thanks and praiſe, which is ſo juſtly his due. Extol and magnify the love, the grace, the mercy, which God through him has revealed to ſinful man. Render thanks to the father and to his ſon Jeſus, for all the inſtances of his condeſcenſion and love, of which ye are here reminded and of which ye are here aſſured. Honour your exalted lord, who has done and ſuffered ſo much for you, and now lives and reigns for your eternal welfare, honour him with holy joy and in the aſſurance of faith. Receive the ſymbols of his love with cheerful, grateful hearts. Praiſe him for his magnanimous ſufferings, for his ſaving death. Make yourſelves continually better acquainted with his divine conſolatory doctrine and endeavour more and more to experience its vital efficacy in your breaſts. Impreſs the image of his ever active and unwearied philanthropy, his beneficent and uſeful life, the image of all his virtues deeply in your hearts, never loſe it entirely from your view, and be diligent to dignify your temper and conduct by forming them more accurately from day to day upon the model of his, and thus to acquire a growing reſemblance to that illuſtrious exemplar of all human perfection. Here renew

renew to him your oath of allegiance, as to your highly exalted lord and king, and let your prompt, unbounded, ſtedfaſt obedience to all his commands, teſtify how ſincerely you are devoted to him. Thus will ye ſolemnize his memorial with underſtanding and ſentiment, and find in it incitement and force to virtue, tranquillity and comfort in life and in death. Amen.

Communion.

SERMON LXI.

The Celebration of the Memory of Jeſus in the Holy Supper, a Matter of vaſt Importance.

GOD, we are met together in thy houſe, for the purpoſe of refreſhing our remembrance of thy love and the love of thy ſon by meditation and by the participation of the holy ſupper, and for publicly and unitedly paying thee the juſt tribute of our thanks. How important, how holy, how ſoothing to us ſhould this memorial be! How aſtoniſhing the proofs of thy condeſcenſion and grace of which it reminds us, how great the hope and aſſurance both for the preſent and for the future which it affords us! O God, what great things haſt thou not done for us, for us guilty ſinners! For our ſakes thou ſpareſt not thy only begotten ſon, but gaveſt him up for us. Thou ſenteſt him from heaven to us, to give us light, conſolation, energy to good, to level for us the paths of virtue and happineſs, to aſſure us of thy gracious diſpoſitions towards us, and to reclaim us to thee and to the moſt bleſſed communion with thee.

Thou

Thou cauſedſt him to die for us, that we might live and be eternally happy. And now thou wilt be our father, acknowledge us for thy children, and hereafter, if we do thy will, render us partakers in the glory of thy ſon, our ſaviour and lord now exalted over all. How great the joy, the gratitude, the reſentment of love to thee, our infinite benefactor, how great the zeal to obey thy commandments, with which the memorial of theſe marvels of thy condeſcenſion and grace ſhould inſpire us! Oh that we were never unmindful of them, that we never contemplated them with indifferent and inſenſible hearts, oh that we might even now ponder them with a ſerioufneſs conſiſtent with our duty and our ſalvation! Bleſs then in this view the meditations in which we are about to engage. Empower them to enlighten our minds, and communicate to us juſt conceptions of what we have here to do, that we may diſcharge our obligations rationally and agreeably to thy holy will, may worthily partake of the communion of thy ſon and thereby promote our ſanctification and improvement. We aſk it of thee in the name of that our ſaviour and redeemer, who has taught us thus to pray: Our father, &c.

I CORINTH. xi. 23, 24, 25.

The lord Jeſus, the ſame night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and ſaid, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the ſame manner alſo he took the cup, when he had ſupped; ſaying: This cup is the new teſtament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

SIMPLICITY, or ſimpleneſs, is juſtly held to be a ſure ſign of truth, my pious hearers. If a propoſition reſults either immediately from the firſt principles of all rational thought, or from what I am taught by ſenſation and probability: if I have no need of any other or however of any far fetched argument for its explication or its demonſtration, and if it be comprehenſible and luminous to every man of ſound reaſon: I run leſs hazard of erring in regard to that propoſition, than if I cannot deduce it except by a long ſeries of concatenated reſults, or cannot apprehend it without an extraordinary application of mind. What may be affirmed concerning truth in general, my dear friends, is of force likewiſe particularly in reference to the doctrines of religion and chriſtianity ſo much the rather, as they are deſigned not ſo much to exerciſe the reflection and ingenuity of the learned, as to the inſtruction, the pacification and improvement of all claſſes and conditions of mankind. The more ſimple and comprehenſible therefore any doctrine of religion and

and chriſtianity is, the more it harmonizes with what we are taught by ſound ſenſe and daily experience, the more certainly may we be aſſured of its veracity. This is the caſe with the doctrine concerning the holy ſupper, which to day is to employ our attention. When we hear Jeſus at the inſtitution of it expreſsly and repeatedly ſay: Do this in remembrance of me; if with unprejudiced minds we maturely weigh what he and his apoſtles tell us on this head, and at the ſame time pay more reſpect to what we gather from ſound ſenſe and the rules of probability, than to what ſome of the learned have ſaid upon the ſubject: we ſhall clearly perceive, that here is nothing elſe but a religious rite intended to preſerve and perpetuate the memory of Jeſus and his death amongſt his confeſſors. The more natural and ſimple this idea of the holy ſupper is, the more ſurely ſhould we have adhered to it had not the taſte for what is natural and ſimple in religion been too ſoon loſt. To this want of taſte for reverend ſimplicity, and the preference on the other hand given to the artificial, the difficult, the incomprehenſible, we are to impute the ſeveral falſe or obſcure and imperfect notions, which have been formed on this ſubject. Perhaps we ourſelves, my friends, may not be entirely free from theſe erroneous conceptions. Perhaps ſome may ſtill have but extremely confuſed ideas concerning the holy ſupper. Perhaps ſome of us may regard it as ſomething myſterious, or look in it for objects

which it does not contain, and thus fail of perceiving the important deſign of it. Perhaps ſome may be now ſaying to themſelves: If the ſacred ſupper be only an emblem of the crucified body and the effuſion of the blood of Jeſus, if it be only a repaſt commemorative of his death, what is the peculiar purport of its inſtitution? What views could our ſaviour have had in it, which might not have been as well attained without it? May not his memory be as well preſerved and renewed without this ſolemnity as by it? May I not daily, may I not as often as I pleaſe, turn my thoughts on him, on his doctrine, on his ſufferings and death, and thereby confirm myſelf in faith, in righteouſneſs and in hope? To repel theſe objections, and in ſo doing to ſettle your judgment and to render your devotion the more rational and enlightened and of courſe the more efficacious and permanent, is the main deſign of my preſent diſcourſe. I ſhall to that end in the firſt place ſhew you, that the holy ſupper was and ſtill is the beſt and ſureſt means, of preſerving the memory of Jeſus, of his death and his reſurrection among mankind; and then to our more immediate edification diſplay the importance of this remembrance, or point out how vaſt the conſequence that it be preſerved amongſt mankind.

A few brief remarks will make it plainly apparent, that the inſtitution of the holy ſupper, and the continued uſe of it, was and ſtill is the beſt and ſureſt means of preſerving the memory

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of Jeſus, of his death and his reſurrection amongſt mankind.

Firſt remark: At the time when Chriſt inſtituted the holy ſupper, and long afterwards, the means of preſerving and perpetuating the memory of any event without the aid of public ſolemnities and ceremonies, were neither ſo general, nor ſo various and ſure, as they now are, and yet it was abſolutely neceſſary for our ſaviour to make ſuch proviſion for his contemporaries and their immediate deſcendants. At that time, my friends, but few people could derive their knowledge from books, and the opportunities of public or private inſtruction in the doctrines of religion and chriſtianity, were comparatively rare. We have now the goſpels and the epiſtles of the apoſtles in our hands: we can all inform ourſelves from them concerning the hiſtory of Jeſus: we have very many other writings, from which we may learn it: we are very frequently and expreſsly and in various methods reminded of theſe matters in the ſchools and in the church. Theſe ſeveral advantages, which we now poſſeſs, were either entirely or partly unknown in the early ages of chriſtianity. The reading of books was confined ſolely to the learned. The writings of the evangeliſts and the apoſtles were not till afterwards gradually compoſed and ſtill later brought into a collection, and even when they were more generally known, they were very far from being in the hands of all or even the generality of chriſtians. But all

chriſtians kept the holy ſupper, and kept it frequently, and were therefore reminded by this ſolemnity of the moſt important events, on which the chriſtian religion was founded. Thus might and did this ſacred rite ſupply the want of other modes of inſtruction in upholding among them a lively remembrance of a tranſaction, which would otherwiſe perhaps have fallen into oblivion. We need not therefore heſitate to affirm, that the holy ſupper in this reſpect in our times and to many of our modern chriſtians is not ſo highly neceſſary, as it was in the early ages and to the primitive chriſtians. But woe to him, who ſhould ſo far abuſe this truth, as to reject this religious act as unneceſſary, and careleſsly abſent himſelf from it! For, beſides that it is impoſſible for him juſtly to lay claim to the appellation of a chriſtian, who does not heartily revere and love Jeſus, who does not readily manifeſt his ſentiments towards him on all proper occaſions, and who does not make it his delight to ſolemnize the memorial of his deliverer and benefactor in the ſociety of his brethren, this rite is moreover ſtill in reſpect to us an excellent means of inciting us to the celebration of this memorial, to facilitate it and to render it profitable to us.

We are namely, and this is my ſecond remark, we are all, whether learned or unlearned, more animal than rational creatures. Senſible objects more forcibly affect us in general and make deeper impreſſions on us, than ſimple ideas of the mind. We ſhould

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not therefore diſdain the aſſiſtance which rites and ceremonies may afford as ſtimulants to devotion and to the diſcharge of our duties; becauſe though we may not be in abſolute want of them, yet to the generality of mankind theſe auxiliaries are doubtleſs highly neceſſary. The foreign impreſſions, made upon our ſenſes by external objects, are unqueſtionably one of the principal obſtructions to attentive and continued reflection on inviſible, abſent, ſpiritual objects. If now at the very time, that our mind ſhould be reflecting on certain doctrines of religion, or on ſome particular events, whereupon it is grounded, ſuch objects are preſented to our ſenſes, as remind us of theſe doctrines or events, as ſhew them to us under alluſive images, or have ſomething analogous to them, it muſt of neceſſity facilitate our reflections. Our attention is more intenſely fixed, we are leſs liable to diſtractions, and our thoughts may by the inſtrumentality of ſuch ſenſible repreſentations more eaſily become emotions. The more ſenſes that are thus moved in the ſame manner and in the ſame view, the ſtronger and more durable muſt the impreſſion be, which the correſpondent ideas of the mind make upon us. This happens however in the holy ſupper. Preciſely that which the ear admits by the preaching of the goſpel of Jeſus and his ſaving death, that likewiſe the eye ſees, that the taſte as it were feels, and we may in ſome meaſure ſay with the apoſtle: that which we have heard with our ears, which we have ſeen with our

eyes, and which our hands have handled, that we believe and confeſs concerning Jeſus, the author of life and happineſs. All therefore here is in the faireſt harmony together. The ſenſes and the thoughts are turned on one and the ſame ſubject, the abſent is in a manner preſent, and the unſeen viſible, and how greatly muſt this conduce to facilitate the renewal of the memory of Jeſus, with how much more vivacity müſt it thus operate within us, than it otherwiſe would!

Add to this, thirdly, my friends, that the preſervation of the memory of Jeſus could not without the greateſt danger have been left to the arbitrary choice of mankind. Were not particular ſeaſons appointed for the ſocial and public celebration of this memorial, had it not been enjoined as a duty to all the confeſſors of Jeſus to participate in this ſolemnity, did it lie abſolutely with themſelves whether and when they would renew the remembrance of their lord and ſaviour by private meditation, had they no other inducement thereto, than what they found in their own breaſts, how ſoon with great numbers would the memory of Jeſus and of what he had done for our beſt intereſts have been totally loſt. How ſeldom and how coldly would it have been preſerved and refreſhed with others in private! Now we are all frequently and expreſsly in the name of our lord and ſaviour invited to it. Now we are all ſummoned to it, as to an act of duty poſitively enjoined us, and the obſervance whereof

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is profitable to us and agreeable to God. Now we may and ought to conſider the celebration of the memorial of Jeſus as an act of religion. Now we perform this act together in common, publicly, and in ſuch a manner as is calculated to render it truly important and awful. Muſt not all this however far more powerfully ſtimulate us to the renewal of the remembrance of Jeſus and the doctrines of religion that are connected with it, muſt it not excite us to more ſerioufneſs and attention, muſt it not give a ſtronger impulſe to our devotion, muſt it not make deeper impreſſions on our heart, than if the whole buſineſs depended on the caſual, volatile ideas, that ſhould occaſionally ariſe in our minds, which we might either cheriſh or not at our own diſcretion, and were not aſſociated with any of that reverence, wherewith a reaſonable creature, that has not loſt all ſenſibility towards God and his perfections, performs an act of divine worſhip in purſuance of his poſitive injunction? Certainly, my friends, whoever underſtands at all the nature of man, whoever knows himſelf, and pays attention to his feelings and experiences, whoever conſiders the little capacity in moſt men for reflection, their inattention and indifference to matters of religion, their diſtracting avocations and cares, and their ordinary conduct, will not be able to deny, that the holy ſupper is a very ſuitable and powerful proviſion, for preſerving and perpetuating the memory of Jeſus and his benefits amongſt his confeſſors, and that the

inſtitution of this ſolemn rite and the obligation to the obſervance of it is an evidence of the greateſt wiſdom and benignity in its founder. Therefore, although the holy ſupper be a ſubject very eaſily to be apprehended and underſtood, though it produce in us no extraordinary effects independent on our diſpoſitions, though in its proper and principal view it be nothing elſe than a repaſt commemorative of Jeſus, his ſufferings, his death and his reſurrection, it deſerves nevertheleſs to be kept by us with the utmoſt reverence and devotion.

In order the more thoroughly to convince you of this and to excite you to it, my pious hearers, we ſhall now proceed to the ſecond part of our diſquiſition. Herein we ſhall lay before you the importance of the memorial here to be ſolemnized, or in other words point out, how highly it concerns us, that the remembrance of Jeſus, and particularly his death and his reſurrection, ſhould be preſerved and perpetuated among mankind. A matter of conſideration, my friends, that has an immediate tendency, to inſpire us with thoſe ſentiments, and to put us in that frame of mind, which beſt accord with the worthy performance of this ſolemnity. Redouble therefore your attention, and endeavour to experience the force of my arguments by what ye yourſelves ſhall feel in your own boſoms.

If the chriſtian religion in general be a momentous concern, my pious hearers, and who will pretend to deny it, that in any degree perceives, how

how much it has contributed to the illumination, to the improvement, to the tranquillity and to the happineſs of our ſpecies, how much it is ſtill always contributing thereto, and how much more it might contribute, did we more rightly underſtand, more firmly believe its doctrines, and more carefully regulate our lives by its precepts — if then the chriſtian religion in general be important, if it be of great conſequence to underſtand it, to be convinced of its divine origin and to obey its laws; then whatever has a tendency to preſerve and refreſh the memory of Jeſus and the events that befell him, muſt be of no vulgar importance. The truth and the authority of the chriſtian religion reſt principally on events, and particularly on events wherein Jeſus, its founder and original promulgator, was concerned. That Jeſus, in all his diſcourſes and actions diſplayed ſo blameleſs, tranſcendent a character, ſo far ſuperior to the tone of thought and opinion that prevailed among his contemporaries and above what his education could lead to expect; that amidſt an extremely corrupt people, he led ſo innocent, holy, beneficent, uſeful a life, not only without all encouragement, but even under the moſt deterring circumſtances, that in a way the moſt diſtant from all oſtentation, with the nobleſt ſimplicity and in the pureſt deſigns he performed ſo many extraordinary works; that without better inſtruction and in a mean condition of life, he remained free from the errors and prejudices which were ſo univerſally prevalent throughout the jewiſh nation,

nation, infecting the great and the ſmall, the learned and the unlearned, and taught mankind true wiſdom, godlineſs, and virtue; that finally in confirmation of his doctrine, as a proof of his diſintereſtedneſs and magnanimity, to the fruſtration of the falſe terreſtrial expectations which his adherents had built upon him, and to the promotion of other important aims, he indured the moſt painful ſufferings and the moſt ignominious death, with wonderful conſtancy and heroiſm, equally remote from weakneſs and vain-glory, and that God to the manifeſtation of his ſupreme complacency in what he taught and did, raiſed him from the dead and exalted him to a pitch of power and glory proportionate to his merits: are the arguments, whereupon the truth and the divine authority of the chriſtian doctrine reſt. From theſe arguments we conclude, that Jeſus was the ſon and ambaſſador of God, that he authentically made known to us the purpoſes of the eternal father, that his doctrines merit our entire aſſent, his promiſes our perfect confidence, his precepts our moſt gladſome obedience, his example our cloſeſt imitation. Are theſe arguments however the baſis of the chriſtian religion, and is the chriſtian religion in general of ſuch vaſt importance: of how ſerious concernment then muſt it be, that we frequently and in various ways, that we ſhould even by ſolemn rites, that have been obſerved by all chriſtians in all ages and in all places, be reminded of them, and how momentous therefore muſt everything

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be, that has a tendency to preſerve and renew the memorials of Jeſus and his remarkable deſtinies!

However, we may form ſtill clearer conceptions of the importance of theſe memorials, by ſomewhat more circumſtantially conſidering, how conſoling and profitable they are and may be to us.

Nothing can be more conſoling to the chriſtian, than the memorial of Jeſus, and of all that he did and that befell him. It reminds him of whatever is able to pacify and ſtrengthen him, of whatever can impart to him courage and confidence in life and in death. Or is it not conſoling, to recollect a teacher who revealed to us the deity as the tendereſt and moſt affectionate parent, who relieved us from all ſervile dread of this moſt exalted being, and raiſed us to the dignity of his children, who proclaimed to us pardon and forgiveneſs of ſins in his name, and promiſed us on his behalf patience and forbearance with our weakneſſes and failings, power and aſſiſtance to good, ſupport in tribulations, help in time of need, conceſſion to our prayers, and the moſt glorious rewards after this life is ended, who told us ſo plainly and authentically, what we are intended to be and what to become, how we are at preſent to behave and what we have hereafter to hope or to fear? Is it not conſoling, to think upon a ſaviour and deliverer, who not only in his lifetime everywhere went about doing good, but even alſo laid down his life as a ranſom for us; upon a ſaviour, whom the goſpel, for the pacification of our conſciences

conſciences and for the excitement of a firm reliance upon God, repreſents as the interceſſor, the mediator, who qualifies us for partaking in the grace and condeſcenſion of the Higheſt and his complacency, and filling up as it were the immenſe interval that is between him and us; upon a ſaviour, whoſe death we may conſider as a ſacrifice, that is far more availing in the ſight of our ſupreme lawgiver and judge, and certifies us far more indubitably of his gracious diſpoſitions towards us and of his readineſs on repentance and amendment to forgive us our ſins, than all thoſe ſacrifices however coſtly could do, which mankind had adopted as expedients for atoning the wrath and propitiating the favour of the offended deity; a ſaviour that may be conſidered as an intervening perſon, the patron and interceſſor of the human race, who ſtept in and ſtaid the avenging arm with the words of mercy: Behold I come to do thy will, o God! Is it not conſoling, to think upon a deliverer and redeemer, who finiſhed his great work, who triumphed over death and the grave, and thereby delivered us from all the terrors of diſſolution and corruption, and has given us a well-grounded hope of a bleſſed immortality, and who now in the name of his heavenly father reigns over us, provides for us, governs us, and who hereafter will as it were divide the power and glory, to which he is exalted with thoſe who model themſelves upon his temper and faithfully follow his ſteps. What grounds of conſolation and peace, my chriſ-

tian friends! Certainly; if I know God as my creator and father; if I be acquainted with his deſigns upon me, and in what relations I ſtand to him; if I know and revere his wiſe and gracious providence, which deigns to provide for the leaſt as well as for the greateſt, and which has given ſuch teſtimonies to man, mean though he be abſtractedly conſidered, of condeſcenſion and pity; if I be aſſured, that on eaſy and equitable terms I may eſcape the puniſhment due to my ſins and participate in the favour of God; if under a ſenſe of my frailty I may rely upon a divine aſſiſtance, if I need not wander forlorn with the horrors of annihilation before me, but may promiſe myſelf that the year of the redeemed ſhall come, that the everlaſting morning ſhall dawn, that the voice of the ſon of God ſhall pierce the caverns of the tomb, ſhall be heard over the dominions of the dead, ſhall reanimate the aſhes of all that ever lived upon the earth, and raiſe a glorious and immortal army from the boſom of corruption, that I ſhall live through eternal ages and enjoy extreme felicity in a future ſtate; and may believe and expect all this, as indubitably as that Jeſus died and roſe again, then I can never except by my own guilty conduct be deficient in grounds of tranquillity and comfort, then may I cheerfully run my race, joyful in proſperity, hopeful in adverſity, ſatisfied with life and undiſmayed behold the approaches of death. How momentous, how dear to me then ſhould in this reſpect be the memory of

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Jeſus and particularly of his death and his reſurrection, but for which all theſe ſupports of conſolation and hope would have been altogether unknown to me or extremely tottering and inſecure!

Conſolatory as is the memorial of Jeſus and of what he did and what befell him, to the chriſtian, no leſs profitable and ſalutary may it alſo be to him. It may contribute in no common degree to his improvement and ſanctification. It has a natural tendency to communicate new life to his virtuous and manly ſentiments, greater firmneſs and activity to his good determinations. It muſt neceſſarily enflame his zeal in obedience to God and being uſeful to his brethren, and in all the difficulties he meets with on the path of duty inſpire him with courage and joy. And in fact, my friends, when I follow Jeſus in his innocent, holy, beneficent life; when I behold him ſo pertinaciouſly and indefatigably labouring at the welfare of ungrateful and obſtinate men, when I ſee him in that generous deſign ſacrificing ſleep, repoſe, the gratifications of ſenſe, convenience and honour, nay even his life; how ſenſibly muſt I be affected at the excellence and the dignity of ſuch a character and ſuch a conduct, what a value, what charms muſt innocence, ſanctity, beneficence, zeal for the general intereſt acquire in my eyes, how deeply muſt I be impreſſed with ſhame at my own indolence and negligence in good, how forcibly muſt I be impelled, to act more conſiſtently with my vocation, to make a better application of

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my capacities and powers, and henceforward, even under the ingratitude of the world, to do as much good, as in my circumſtances and ſituation I am able to do! When I behold Jeſus, my leader and forerunner on the path of virtue and happineſs, looking ſtedfaſtly to God, his heavenly father, always obediently and ſubmiſſively adoring the appointments of him who had ſent him into the world and honouring him with truſt and confidence even in the ſevereſt trials that come upon him; when I ſee him bear the moſt heavy, the moſt unmerited ſufferings with calmneſs and reſignation of mind, not regarding the moſt injurious inſults, requiting his malicious adverſaries and perſecutors with gentleneſs and bleſſings, marching forth with firmneſs and intrepidity to an ignominious, tormenting death: oh then ſurely muſt every inordinate luſt and paſſion, that ſtill may harbour in my breaſt, be mute, then muſt all diſcontented complaints of the divine diſpenſations be dumb, then impatience, wrath, hatred and revenge appear to me in their moſt hideous forms, then my heart becomes ſoftened even like melting wax to gentleneſs, to forbearance, to reconcilement, to the love of my bittereſt foe, then feel I ſufficient force within, to ſhew my brother who has treſpaſſed againſt me all poſſible indulgence and to forgive him until ſeventy times ſeven his offences; yes, then I feel with unwonted fervour, that my honour and my proſperity reſt on my obedience to God, my reſignation to his diſpo-

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ſals, on placing my confidence in him and allowing no obſtacles, no difficulties to deter me from running the race which he has ſet before me, or to grow weary on my courſe. And afterwards when I behold Jeſus riſe triumphantly from the grave, when I ſee his ſufferings and ignominy changed into exultation and honour, when I perceive his obedience and his fidelity crowned with the richeſt glories of heaven; when I contemplate him, who upon earth ſubmitted to the loweſt ſtep of abaſement, and appeared in the form of a ſervant, now in heaven exalted to the higheſt pinacle of honour, and appearing in the form of God; him, who in his ſtate of humiliation was poor and had not where to lay his head, now the lord of nature and inheriting the treaſures of heaven and of earth; him who bore upon his croſs the mock title of king of the jews, now in very deed the king of kings and lord of lords; him whoſe bleſſed head was pierced and wounded by the crown of thorns, now for ever encircled with a crown of glory; when I view this benefactor of mankind, now wielding the ſceptre of the univerſe, at the right hand of the majeſty on high, as the lord and king of men, in that hand which I ſaw formerly holding a ridiculous reed: what courage, what force muſt it impart to me for perſeverance in righteouſneſs! How deep the impreſſion it muſt make upon me, when I hear Jeſus as it were calling to me: Thus does the Almighty deliver them from death who hope in him: thus he

rewards

rewards his ſincere worſhippers for their fidelity in his ſervice, and their perſeverance in well-doing: thus he indemnifies them for the privations they ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake: thus well pleaſing to him is a virtuous and uſeful life: this is the way whereby we become partakers of his pre-eminent favour, the way that conducts to the higheſt pinacle of honour and happineſs. And ſhall I not tread that way with joy, however difficult and arduous it may ſeem, and perſevere in it even unto the end? What can ſupply me with motive and ability to duty and to virtue, if ſuch conſiderations are unable to do ſo? How can I at the ſame time meditate on what God has done for us by the miſſion of his ſon into the world and by giving him up to death, how can I ponder the magnitude of that condeſcenſion and love, which he has thus revealed to us, unworthy as we are, without feeling myſelf pervaded with ſympathetic love and everlaſting gratitude to this infinite benefactor, without exclaiming with the apoſtle: We love him, becauſe he firſt loved us, loved us with unſpeakable affection! How can I attentively conſider the extraordinary occurrences, whereby God corroborated the doctrine of his ſon, whereby he confirmed his divine miſſion and declared him to be the lord and judge of the world, without renewing my reſolutions to obey his commands and to comply with whatever has a tendency to aſſure me of the approbation and the favour of this highly exalted maſter and judge! Muſt not

however this advance my improvement and ſanctification? And ſhall not the memorial of Jeſus, ſhall not all that is calculated to preſerve and renew it with myſelf and others, be of tranſcendent importance to me?

This being the caſe, my pious hearers, you cannot fail of perceiving, that the inſtitution of the holy ſupper is an extremely wiſe and ſalutary ordinance, and that we have no need to look for any myſterious and incomprehenſible matters in this religious rite, to aſcribe to it efficacies and effects which it does not poſſeſs, in order to ſtimulate us to a truly devout obſervance of it. No, in the original ſimplicity and perſpicuity of its ſignification it deſerves to be kept with the profoundeſt reverence, with the utmoſt ſenſibility as a powerful means of cheriſhing the memory of Jeſus amongſt us and thereby of promoting our comfort and our ſanctification. Let us therefore now thus keep this ſolemn ordinance, my dear hearers. The memorial of Jeſus, and of what he has done and ſuffered for our benefit, ſhall now take the entire poſſeſſion of our minds. We will follow him in his life and in his ſufferings, we will trace all his ſteps from Bethlehem to Calvary, remind ourſelves of his doctrine, of his promiſes, of his example and of the intimate and ſacred relations in which we ſtand to him at preſent as his diſciples and followers, as his redeemed, and in which we ſhall hereafter be placed as partakers in his glory. Yes, to him, that deareſt deliverer and ſaviour, we

are beholden for all that can pacify, conſole and rejoice us. Through him we are brought to the knowledge of God and his will: through him we have diſcovered the road that leads to perfection and happineſs: through him we are certified of the grace of our offended ſovereign and judge: in him and for his ſake we may aſſuredly promiſe ourſelves the forgiveneſs of our ſins, the reſurrection from the dead and life everlaſting. He has dearly earnt for us theſe privileges and felicities by ſo vaſt a ſacrifice; he has purchaſed them for us by his blood. This will we never forget, for this will we now thank him with one conſent. In this will we now rejoice at his table. For this will we publicly praiſe him and his heavenly father with united hearts. To this dear deliverer and ſaviour moreover we unalienably belong. We may no longer live to ourſelves, or follow our ſinful luſts and paſſions, but we muſt regulate our lives by the determinations of him who died and roſe again for us. His doctrine is holy and his life was the perfect expreſſion of his doctrine. Therefore ſhould we, who profeſs his doctrine and call ourſelves his followers, be holy even as he was holy. We with him ſhould die unto ſin and live again unto righteouſneſs. We ſhould like him by godlineſs, by wiſdom and virtue, by meekneſs and humility, by beneficence, by zeal for the honour of God and for the intereſts of our brethren, diſtinguiſh ourſelves from the great maſs of mankind, and like him look rather at the things

that are not ſeen than at the things that are ſeen. To frame ourſelves upon his temper and to make his behaviour the model of ours ſhould be the object of our ambition as it is our true honour and renown. Thereby ought we to ſhew in very deed, that real affection and gratitude to him reſide in our breaſts. This will we henceforth vow to him in ſincerity of heart. To this will we here bind ourſelves afreſh before God and the world. And thus ſhall the memorial of Jeſus and his death be ſubſervient to our conſolation and improvement. It ſhall be continually ſinking deeper in our hearts, accompany us in all our ways, ſhield us againſt all temptations to iniquity, fortify us under every calamity, keep us ſtedfaſt in every difficulty, and hereafter, when we come to die, fill us with hope and aſſurance for ever. Amen.

Communion.

SERMON LXII.

Account of our Chriſtianity.

GOD, eternal fount of light and happineſs, we publicly and unitedly rejoice before thee in the ſeveral advantages, with which thou haſt favoured us as chriſtians. How much more ſafe and pleaſant is our path of life become by the doctrines and promiſes of chriſtianity! How much more eaſily and quickly may we advance upon it to perfection! How much more ſatisfaction and felicity may we already here enjoy, and how boldly march onward to that purer felicity and joy, which futurity opens before us! And if all of us were chriſtians in deed and in truth, if we were entirely and conſtantly pervaded and actuated by the ſpirit of chriſtianity, how wiſe, how virtuous, how contented and happy ſhould we be! Oh might we then always be acquiring juſter perceptions of chriſtianity, thy choiceſt boon, always making a worthier uſe of it, and always more completely experiencing its divine power! Might particularly we who intend now to celebrate the memory of its founder, our lord, in the holy ſupper, be thoroughly ſenſible to the value of thoſe ſpecial advantages, which as chriſtians we poſſeſs, and be

ſtimulated thereby to adopt truly chriſtian ſentiments and purſuits! Might we henceforward live no longer to ourſelves, no longer according to the impulſes and cravings of our inferior appetites, but wholly according to the will and to the glory of him, who ſo greatly loved us, as to deliver himſelf over to death for our ſakes! Yes, o God, may this be the fruit of our meditations and our ſacrament of the ſacred ſupper. Accompany them in this reſpect with the holy influences of thy grace and heavenly benediction, and hearken to our prayer through Jeſus Chriſt, our lord, in whoſe name we further call upon thee, ſaying: Our father, &c.

GALATIANS ii. 20.

Chriſt liveth in me.

WE cloſe this year with a perfectly chriſtian act, my pious hearers; with the ordinance of the ſacred ſupper. And what acknowledgments do we make by it! What benefits and felicities do we glory in there! To have paſſed a whole year in the profeſſion and faith of the chriſtian doctrine, in the imitation of its divine founder, and in the enjoyment of the various privileges procured to us by him: is not this a ſignal happineſs? What a great value muſt chriſtianity confer on every ſhorter or longer diviſion of our lives! What light, what ſerenity, what ſatisfaction muſt it diffuſe over every day of it!

How

How much more good muſt the chriſtian, who is one in deed and in truth, do and enjoy in the ſpace of a year, than any other man, who is not honoured with that diſtinction! He is not aſhamed of the paſt, he is not alarmed at the future. The former is not loſt to him; he has been ſtrewing good ſeed in it: and that promiſes him glorious fruits. Calmly as he can look back upon the paſt, with equal confidence and joy may he expect the future. Yes, a year of a truly chriſtian temper and life, a year in which, as our text expreſſes it, Chriſt lives in us and his ſpirit governs us, is of more value than ever ſo many years, which we have dreamed out in vanity, or conſumed in inordinate, baſe luſts and paſſions. As the latter draw after them only ſorrow and repentance and deſtitution and miſery, ſo the former has a no leſs conſiderable than permanent influence on our perfection and happineſs in all times and through the infinite ages of eternity. Oh that the year elapſed might to many of us retain this worth! Oh that we could ſafely affirm that in it we have practiſed really much chriſtian virtue and enjoyed really much chriſtian felicity! With what emotions of joy and gratitude might we then cloſe it by celebrating the memorial of our lord, and how hopefully continue our courſe to the goal! Let us then call ourſelves to account on this head, my chriſtian friends. Let us propoſe to ourſelves the important queſtion, whether we can ſay with the apoſtle, Chriſt liveth in me, his ſpirit, his mind has regulated and governed me through the

year now drawing to its termination, I have experienced the power of chriſtianity in it and enjoyed its advantages. Are we therefore, in order to diſcuſs this comprehenſive queſtion, are we become morally better by chriſtianity? Are we thereby become more uſeful to our fellow-creatures? Are we become more contented and happy? Or have we even diſtinguiſhed ourſelves during this year by chriſtian wiſdom and virtue, by chriſtian uſefulneſs, by chriſtian ſatisfaction and felicity?

Wiſdom and virtue form the firſt and principal feature in the character of the genuine chriſtian; the firſt and chief lineament of the man, in whom Chriſt lives. And have we during the year now ſhortly to expire thereby ſhewn and diſtinguiſhed ourſelves as genuine chriſtians? Have all our ſentiments and determinations given evidence of chriſtian wiſdom, and all our purſuits and actions of chriſtian virtue? Might it be remarked of us in this reſpect, that we are diſciples and followers of Jeſus? Ah, my deareſt friends, if we have without ſcruple taken part in the reigning follies of our times, if the manners, the prejudices and faſhions, the frivolity and paſſion for diſſipation generally prevailing have been the objects of our admiration and purſuit, if we have chimed in with them without reſtraint or reſerve; if we have thought and decided upon the moſt ſerious ſubjects, concerning God and religion, concerning our appointment and our obligations, as the great maſs of mankind are wont to think and to decide of them;

if

if we were indifferent towards God and coldhearted towards our brethren; if we preferred the ſeen to the unſeen, the preſent to the future, outward proſperity to the perfection of our ſpirit, and propoſed riches, or honour, or idle amuſements and the pleaſures of ſenſe, or a ſoft luxurious life as the leading objects of our deſires and purſuits: then are we far diſtant from chriſtian wiſdom, we think and decide quite otherwiſe than genuine chriſtians ſhould think and decide. And how dare we pretend to chriſtian virtue, if not the love of God and man, but cuſtom, or formality and outward circumſtances impell us to our beſt actions; if we have propoſed as our model for imitation, not Jeſus and his blameleſs holy life, but the men of the world and what among them is called decency and good manners? How dare we pretend to chriſtian virtue, if we know not how to deny ourſelves anything, to controul our appetites and affections, to govern our paſſions, to aſſert our moral liberty, and in our determinations inquire rather concerning what is eaſy or difficult, what is agreeable or diſagreeable to the ſenſual man, than what is right or wrong, what is proper or improper, what is conformable or contrary to the will of God? No, he who thinks and lives in this manner, is deſtitute of chriſtian wiſdom and virtue, he cannot preſume to ſay, that Chriſt lives in him. And would in that caſe the profeſſion of chriſtianity in the leaſt avail us? Could we pretend to rejoice in the elapſed year

year as having been ſpent in chriſtian ſentiments and purſuits? No, if we would have competent reaſons for ſo doing, Chriſt muſt live in us. His ſpirit, his temper muſt actuate us, and regulate the whole of our conduct. We muſt be able to bring proof, that we have never entirely loſt ſight of his example and his precepts, that we have been uniformly diligent ſo to think, to determine, to ſpeak, to act as he in our place and in our circumſtances, would have thought, decided, ſpoken, acted. We ſhould be able to give evidence, that we have watched over ourſelves, governed ourſelves, reſiſted and conquered temptations to evil, carefully and willingly fulfilled our obligations, laboured inceſſantly at our moral improvement, brought without heſitation many ſacrifices of outward advantages and ſenſual gratifications to truth and virtue, and have remained true to our corrected, more generous principles. Thrice happy he, whoſe heart bears him teſtimony of this! Chriſtian wiſdom and chriſtian virtue have been his attendants through the courſe of this year. And from what follies and iniquities have they not preſerved him! With what good, godly actions muſt they not have marked the days of it as they paſſed! How calmly may he now look back on them, and how cheerfully continue his career! He has experienced the efficacy of chriſtianity to his improvement and may promiſe himſelf its powerful influence for the future. Chriſt lives in him, his ſpirit ani-

animates him; how could his purſuit after always purer wiſdom and virtue be ever in vain?

Uſefulneſs is a ſecond leading feature in the character of the genuine chriſtian, of the man in whom Chriſt lives. By uſefulneſs Jeſus, the founder of chriſtianity, as undeniably as manifeſtly diſtinguiſhed himſelf from all the ſages, from all the teachers and lawgivers, from all the friends and promoters of human happineſs, that lived either before or after him. He thought, he acted, he lived ſolely for others; to their ſervice he ſacrificed his eaſe, his honour, his pleaſure, his life itſelf with the moſt perfect readineſs. To inſtruct, to improve, to ſoothe, to bleſs mankind; to make the wiſeſt arrangements for the proſperity of diſtant tribes and generations, and to ſtrew the beſt ſeed for the harveſt of all future times: was his darling, his only occupation. Short as his life was on earth, ſo prolific was it in charitable, beneficent purſuits and actions. And are theſe likewiſe features of our character, of our temper, my chriſtian hearers? Have we likewiſe diſtinguiſhed ourſelves thereby as genuine chriſtians during the year now haſtening to its end? Have we lived not barely for ourſelves, but alſo for others, not only ſought to promote our own welfare, but alſo the welfare of our brethren according to our means? Are we become in any way uſeful to others, and have we had the ſerious inclination and the actual deſign of being ſo? Was our ear and our heart never ſhut againſt the cry of the poor and wretched,

the

the complaints of our leſs fortunate brethren? Did we readily give, wherever we were able to give? Did we readily aſſiſt, where we had the means of aſſiſtance? Did we ſhrink from no pains, no labour, no trouble, which a generous concern for the public good required? Did we readily aſſuage every ſorrow that we had the means and opportunity of aſſuaging, and did we readily in our ſmaller or larger circle diffuſe ſatisfaction and joy around us? Have we managed the affairs of our ſtation and calling with induſtry and care, not ſimply becauſe they tend to nouriſh, or enrich, or advance us in ſociety, but principally from more liberal principles, becauſe we were deſirous of making a uſe truly good and profitable to others of our capacities and powers, of our talents and acquirements? Have we therefore likewiſe in the year now cloſing contributed our ſhare to the diminution of human miſery, and to the augmentation of human happineſs? And have we done ſo without affectation, with ſatisfaction and pleaſure, from love to God and man, as confeſſors of the moſt beneficent doctrine, as diſciples and followers of the moſt ſublime philanthropiſt? Thrice happy we, if we can ſincerely reply to theſe queſtions in the affirmative! Then are the days that are paſt neither loſt to us nor to our brethren. Then will the remembrance of them never diſturb, never ſhame us, but fill our minds with pure and manly ſatisfaction. Then may we make it our boaſt and our joy, that we likewiſe in this

this reſpect have experienced the power of chriſtianity, and, actuated by its ſpirit, done and promoted more good within the courſe of a year, than without its aſſiſtance we could have done and promoted.

And have we likewiſe thirdly enjoyed during this year proportionably more good, more ſatisfaction and felicity, than one who is not a chriſtian can enjoy? Purer, fuller ſources of comfort and ſerenity, of pleaſure and ſatisfaction ſtand open to us as chriſtians on all hands. Have we drawn therefrom, and though not entirely ſatisfied our thirſt for happineſs, yet ſtilled and appeaſed it? We but too ſeldom call ourſelves to account on this matter, my pious hearers, becauſe we are ſtill prone to form too erroneous and inadequate conceptions of the deſign of chriſtianity and of the benefits it is calculated to procure and does actually procure us. We ſeek and expect perhaps eminent felicity in the future, but not in the preſent world from a truly chriſtian temper and conduct. We perhaps look upon this temper and conduct as an obſtacle to that ſatisfaction and pleaſure, which we may and ſhould ſurmount purely in the hope of future remunerations. Thus we loſe ſight of the natural and neceſſary connection between virtue and happineſs, and make chriſtianity, which its founder himſelf declares to be a light burden and an eaſy yoke, an oppreſſive load. No, my deareſt friends, if Chriſt lives in us, if we are actuated by his ſpirit, we muſt have experienced

the efficacy of his doctrine and his example, by having paſſed the days now glided by more pleaſed and contented than moſt other perſons. And is this the caſe? I aſk not, whether we have met with fewer adverſe events than others; not, whether our undertakings and affairs have ſucceeded better than their's; not, whether we are become richer and mightier and greater than they? Theſe privileges chriſtianity nowhere promiſes us; it teaches us to diſtinguiſh proſperity from happineſs, and though it may not guide us to the poſſeſſion of the former, it effectually leads to the enjoyment of the latter. Have we therefore been really contented and happy in the knowledge and in the practice of chriſtianity? Have we remained free from all irregular paſſions and luſts that tend to diſturb and deſtroy the peace of our mind and the health of our body? Have we not by any fooliſh and impertinent deſires and affections been driven to and fro and prevented in the calm enjoyment of the beautiful and good, which we actually poſſeſs? Have neither covetouſneſs nor ambition, neither envy nor jealouſy, neither vanity nor pride diſquieted us in our affairs and in our intercourſe with our brethren? Has hearty good will towards all mankind accompanied us into every ſociety, and ſincere complacency in all the beautiful and good that they had and did and enjoyed, made their countenance and their preſence pleaſing and agreeable? Have we taken a brotherly intereſt in all their innocent pleaſures and ſatisfactions,

tions, and thereby heightened and multiplied our own? Have we willingly and cheerfully diſcharged our obligations, becauſe they are impoſed on us by God, and becauſe we therein promoted the welfare of mankind, and alleviated and ſweetened the troubles with which they were involved by conſidering them as the ordinances and precepts of the Allwiſe and Allgracious? Have we in the accompliſhment of our duty, enjoyed that pure, that generous ſatisfaction ariſing from the conſciouſneſs of having done right and well and advanced our ſpiritual perfection? Has the thought of God, our tendereſt father in heaven, been uniformly preſent and uniformly reviving to us; has the ſenſe of his nearneſs been never inconvenient, but always conſoling to us? Has this thought diffuſed light and order over all that we ſaw and heard, whatever befell ourſelves and others, and communicated to all a higher value and a fairer form in our perceptions? Have we in this grand, this bliſsful thought found ſolace and refreſhment, whenever either we or our brethren have met with ſomewhat diſaſtrous, and rendered the afflictions of life not only tolerable but beneficial, by revering them as diſpenſations of our heavenly father and profiting by them to our moral improvement? Has the aſſured hope of a better, everlaſting life expelled all anxious dread of death and its conſequences from our ſouls? Has it rendered the uſe and enjoyment of the preſent the more important and ſalutary? Animated by theſe joyous proſpects,

have

have we drawn nearer to futurity without conſternation and affright, and fraught with hope continued our race to the mark? So many advantages and felicities, my deareſt friends, which chriſtianity infallibly procures to its genuine confeſſors. So many advantages and felicities which Jeſus, even in the loweſt abaſement and amidſt the moſt poignant ſufferings in full meaſure enjoyed, and which likewiſe cannot be foreign to us, if we are animated and governed by his ſpirit. Thrice happy we, if we have experienced them even during the year now rapidly drawing to its end! Thus will it alſo in this reſpect not be loſt to us. Then have we enjoyed in it real, abiding felicity and thereby capacitated ourſelves for ſtill greater felicity in the future.

And this, my pious hearers, is the ſerious examination to which we would incite you at the termination of the preſent year into the ſtate of your chriſtianity and its influence on your behaviour and on your happineſs. Theſe are the conſiderations, that ſhould lead us in our reflections, if we are deſirous of deciding, whether we have lived as perſons, in whom Chriſt liveth, have diſtinguiſhed ourſelves, by chriſtian wiſdom and virtue, by chriſtian uſefulneſs, by chriſtian contentment and felicity from others. Can we venture to deliver this teſtimony of ourſelves, my chriſtian brethren, we may likewiſe venture boldly to approach the table of our lord, and there make a ſolemn confeſſion of our chriſtian diſpoſitions and hopes. Yes, here will we publicly and

ſocially

ſocially rejoice in the benefits of chriſtianity and its bleſſed effects and fruits. Here will we praiſe God, the father, and his ſon, Jeſus Chriſt, for every good, pious ſentiment, by which we have been actuated during the preſent year, for every good, pious act that we have performed in it, for every refined ſatisfaction that we have enjoyed, and for every advance we have made on the path of wiſdom and virtue. For, without the aid of chriſtianity, without the influence of the divine doctrine and the ſublime temper of our lord, we ſhould not have had theſe good ſentiments, not have performed theſe good actions, not enjoyed theſe refined ſatisfactions, and not have ſo proceeded onwards to perfection. Without the aid of chriſtianity we ſhould probably have been the deſpicable ſlaves of error and ſuperſtition, ſlaves of low paſſions and cupidities, wretched, hopeleſs mortals. Yes, to him, our deliverer, who has ſet us at liberty, and through whom we are become wiſe, good, contented people, to him will we here with united hearts preſent the offering of joy and gratitude, which he has ſo juſt a right to expect from us, his redeemed. — Here will we however likewiſe bind and encourage ourſelves to a continually faithfuller uſe of that chriſtianity, the power and felicity whereof we have ſo ſignally experienced. Yes, let us unanimouſly declare: Chriſt, whoſe merits in behalf of us and of the whole human race we here extoll, whoſe diſciples and followers we here profeſs to be,

ſhall conſtantly live in us. His ſpirit and his temper ſhall be uniformly the vital principle of our's; his precepts and his example ſhall be the rule of our whole deportment. To him, the captain of our ſalvation, will we ſteadily look, in his footſteps with ever increaſing alacrity tread, be ever endeavouring to gain a cloſer reſemblance to him and by greater aſſimilation with him be continually more qualified for the happineſs which he has prepared for us in his heavenly kingdom. So ſhall we both here and hereafter have communion with him, and in his communion be for ever bleſſed. Amen.

Communion.

SERMON LXIII.

Caution againſt Thoughtleſſneſs during our Attendance at the holy Supper.

GOD, who though infinitely exalted above us and all created beings, yet lookeſt down upon us as thy children and knoweſt and approveſt every good deſire of our hearts, we are met together in thy houſe, to celebrate the memorial of thy love and the love of thy ſon, Jeſus Chriſt, publicly and ſocially to thank thee for the greateſt of all bounties, to fill our minds with ſuch ſentiments of gratitude, of reciprocal love and of obedience as may render this ſolemnity ſalutary and reviving to us. What an honour, what a happineſs for us, that we can raiſe ourſelves in thought to thee, the Eternal and Infinite, that we can revere thee as our father, that we can have communion with thee and with thy dear ſon! Oh might we all ſo employ this honour and this happineſs, as is adequate to their exalted worth! Oh might the hearts of us all be ſo actuated and pervaded by ſincerity, ſerioufneſs, devotion, fervour, as to render us truly qualified for the lofty occupation in which we now purpoſe to engage! Father of ſpirits, in whom we live and think and are, do thou thyſelf infuſe into our ſpirit, ſo oft overborne by

ſenſe, new ſtrength and vigour to ſoar aloft above all that is terreſtrial and viſible, to converſe alone with thee, its creator and father, and with Jeſus Chriſt its deliverer, and that in ſuch manner as becomes weak, ſinful, guilty creatures, but creatures by thee highly favoured and called to never ending happineſs. Bleſs to that end the conſiderations we ſhall now enter upon. Let us perceive the truth of them, not reſiſt their influence but willingly and incontinently comply with their demands. We pray thee for theſe gifts and graces in the name of thy ſon Jeſus, and truſting in his promiſes, addreſs thee further as Our father, &c.

I CORINTH. xi. 20, 21, 22.

When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's ſupper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own ſupper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houſes to eat and to drink in? or deſpiſe ye the church of God, and ſhame them that have not? What ſhall I ſay to you? ſhall I praiſe you in this? I praiſe you not.

REGARDING the celebration of our religious rites in general and in keeping the ordinance of the holy ſupper in particular there are principally two aberrations into which we are liable to fall. One is ſuperſtition, the other thoughtleſſneſs. The former, ſuperſtition, induces us to expect more from a religious rite, than we are reaſonably warranted to expect, or to aſcribe powers and efficacies to it which

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it has not. The latter, thoughtleſſneſs, perſuades us to deem lightly of the whole matter as of leſs importance than in fact it is, to conſider it as an inſignificant ceremony, to loſe ſight of its deſign and its utility, and therefore to act towards it without attention and ſerioufneſs, with coldneſs and indifference. Both of theſe deflections are dangerous: in both we deprive ourſelves of even thoſe advantages, which a rational and devout obſervance of the duties of religious worſhip might procure us. Againſt the former of theſe two deviations we have already ſome ſhort time ſince cautioned you, my pious hearers. To-day we will in the fear of God endeavour to guard you againſt the other, or reclaim you from it. We will namely caution you againſt levity and thoughtleſſneſs in your attendance on the holy ſupper. Accept this caution with docility, with obediential ſubmiſſion of heart, let every individual think that it is delivered to him in particular, and not ſolely to the reſt, let every one apply it to himſelf, and not ſeek to deny or excuſe failings, which muſt be extremely dangerous and injurious to him, if he wilfully perſiſt in them.

The Corinthians, whoſe conduct the apoſtle Paul ſo ſeverely reprehends in our text, were guilty of ſuch thoughtleſſneſs at the ſacred ſupper. They forgot the deſign of this holy inſtitution. They conſidered this religious repaſt as they did any ordinary meal. They provided for the gratification of their ſenſual appetites, their hunger and thirſt, but not

for the ſuſtentation and refreſhment of their minds, nor for the quieting and improvement of their hearts. The rich deſpiſed the poor; thoſe who came firſt, waited not for the reſt who were ſtill to come, and each of them ate and drank as if he had been at home and had not gone thither for the purpoſe of celebrating a ſolemn act of devotion. Thus they ate and drank unworthily, as not diſtinguiſhing the lord's body, as not adverting to the import of the ſymbols of his crucified body and his poured out blood and the communion that ſubſiſts between all chriſtians without diſtinction of rank and ſtation, uniting them together in one ſpiritual body, whoſe head is Chriſt. Though it is not probable that we ſhould now, in the preſent conſtitution of public worſhip, abuſe the ſacred ſupper in ſo groſs and manifeſtly indecent a manner, as the corinthian chriſtians did, yet by that thoughtleſſneſs and levity which lay at the bottom of their criminal procedure; we may be guilty in various ways, and againſt theſe failings it is now my intention particularly to warn you.

It is in the firſt place thoughtleſſneſs, if we engage in an important buſineſs or concern without turning our attention to it, without reflecting upon the real nature and ſcope of it, and on the beſt method of tranſacting it, and the more important this buſineſs or concern is, the greater and more culpable is the levity betrayed in ſuch neglect of practice and reflection. Is not however the ordinance of the ſacred

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ſupper an important concern, a ſerious buſineſs? Is it not a religious act, whereby we have communion with God and his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, that is, whereby we call to mind in a ſenſible and lively manner the relations in which we ſtand to our creator and redeemer and are confirmed in the diſpoſitions conſonant to theſe relations? Does not this act remind us of the ſublimeſt doctrines of religion, of all that God has done for the recovery and ſalvation of ſinful man? Does it not lay us under the ſtrongeſt obligations to a virtuous and holy life? Does it not aſſure us of the greateſt of the divine mercies, and cheer us with the hope of eternal happineſs, if we attend upon it as true chriſtians? Does it not therefore merit our utmoſt attention? But how do perhaps the generality of chriſtians obſerve this important holy act? Do they prepare themſelves for it, as far as their leiſure and circumſtances allow, by rational, ſerious reflection? Do they in retirement devoutly meditate upon what God through Jeſus Chriſt has done for them, what largeſſes and felicities he has offered them by this his ambaſſador, and on what conditions he has offered them, whether they have fulfilled theſe conditions, whether they have acknowledged and accepted the grace of God with penitential remorſe for their ſins and with grateful joy, and ſeek to render themſelves continually more capable and deſerving of it by a chriſtian temper and a chriſtian life? Do they ſay previouſly to their going to the

ſacred ſupper: What is this religious ordinance? Of what does it remind, to what does it oblige, of what does it aſſure me? How ſhould I be diſpoſed, how ſhould I behave, that I may obſerve this ordinance to the glory of God the father, and of his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, that I may attend upon it to the invigoration of my faith, to the promotion of my comfort and my ſanctification? How can and ſhould I ſo thoroughly imprint upon my mind, what I now hear and ſee and do, that it may profit me in future? Ah me, I greatly fear leſt theſe conſiderations ſhould to many chriſtians, who come to the table of the lord, be utterly foreign and unknown! We come but too frequently to this holy table, only becauſe we ſee others do ſo, or becauſe we have been long in the habit of coming, or becauſe we have ſome faint ideas, that it is proper, ſalutary, neceſſary to do ſo. We therefore attend upon one of the moſt important acts of public worſhip, with a totally unprepared, cold, unfeeling heart, we perform it negligently, reſign ourſelves at it to various extrinſic, diſtracting impreſſions, or are ſatisfied with repeating to ourſelves certain words and forms of prayer got by rote, which perhaps we have never underſtood, and then return home from the celebration of this memorial, without rightly knowing what we have been about, whoſe memory we have been celebrating, what obligations we have been taking upon us, in whom we have now to truſt, or what we have further to do! But can we call ſuch

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a behaviour otherwiſe than extremely light and thoughtleſs? Is it then becoming of a frail, indigent, ſinful creature, to approach in ſuch a frame of mind his creator and judge and to enter into engagements with him? Is it then becoming of a chriſtian to celebrate the memorial of his teacher, his deliverer, his highly exalted lord and king with ſuch inattention and indifference? Can ſuch a celebration be acceptable to the omnipreſent deity, who ſees in ſecret, can it be agreeable to his ſon, Jeſus Chriſt, who demands ſincerity of his votaries, can it procure us the ſmalleſt utility or comfort, if our underſtanding and our heart have had ſo little ſhare in it?

It is ſecondly levity and thoughtleſſneſs, if we openly and voluntarily pretend to be what we are not, or to aſſume a dignified character which we have not, and which we cannot falſely aſſume, without affronting and diſhonouring him, after whoſe name we are called, or in whoſe fellowſhip we glory. How deſpicable does this kind of vanity render a man in civil ſociety, who boaſts of the favour and friendſhip of great perſonages that are ſcarcely known to him, with whom he has no particular connection, and who perhaps would be aſhamed of him and proclaim him for a liar, if they ſhould come to hear of his pretenſions to their familiarity and confidence! And what do ye otherwiſe, ye, who at the table of the lord give yourſelves out for chriſtians, and yet have nothing chriſtian

tian in your temper and nothing chriſtian in your life? Ye min_le here amongſt the worſhippers and children of God, and yet no filial reverence, no real love of God, no gratitude for his benefits dwells in your hearts, and yet ye wilfully tranſgreſs his laws, and have never once firmly and ſeriouſly reſolved, to behave for the future as his dutiful ſubjects. Ye join in appearance with the friends and adherents of Jeſus, ye make public profeſſion that ye hold him for your maſter and belong to him, that ye are his followers, and yet ye do not what he orders, and yet ye throw off the yoke of his commandments as a heavy burden, and regulate not your carriage by his inclinations, but by your luſts and paſſions, and yet ye imitate him in no part of his virtuous and holy life. Ye place yourſelves here among his redeemed, who bring their offerings of praiſe and thankſgiving to him as their deliverer, who magnify him for the light that illumines their minds, for the liberty which they enjoy, for the conſolation that revives them, and yet ye are ſtill in the hands of your enemies, in the power of error and vice, and yet ye ſtill live in the darkneſs of ignorance, in the bonds of iniquity, and deſpiſe or neglect the uſe of thoſe means, that might enlighten you and make you better and happier. Ye here expreſs your hopes of that bleſſed immortality whereof Jeſus has given us the aſſurance, and to which he has ſmoothed for us the way, and yet ye are quite earthly and carnally minded, and yet

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all your aims and endeavours are directed merely to ſenſible, tranſitory objects, and yet ye think and live as though ye could abide for ever here, or as though the death of your body were at the ſame time the death of your ſoul. Ye declare by this ſocial repaſt, that ye conſider all mankind and eſpecially all chriſtians as your brothers and ſiſters, with whom ye are connected in the cloſeſt ties and to whom you owe all poſſible kindneſs, and yet is your heart cold and loveleſs towards them, and yet there are many of theſe your brothers and ſiſters, whom ye deſpiſe, envy, hate, towards whom ye are inimically and revengefully diſpoſed, and yet ye refuſe to forgive ſuch of theſe your brothers and ſiſters as have offended you, their faults from the bottom of your heart, and ſincerely to be reconciled with them. How can all this however be conſiſtent with the profeſſion ye here declare? Or how can ye make this profeſſion on reflection, with deliberation, as reaſonable, conſiderate perſons, ſince it is ſo manifeſtly at variance with your ſentiments and with your conduct? What right then have you to boaſt of a fellowſhip with Jeſus and profeſs to be his diſciples? Will and can he acknowledge you as ſuch? Will and can he think himſelf honoured by this profeſſion? Will and muſt he not rather impute it to you as a ſin, that ye abuſe his name and ſcandalize his holy doctrine by an unholy life? Or is then the maſter, to whom ye pretend to belong and to ſerve, ſuch a weak, vain, worldly-minded maſter as to regard

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ſimply the vaſt number and the obſequious geſtures, but not the ſentiments of his votaries, who is incapable of diſtinguiſhing hypocrites from the righteous, or one that may be mocked without danger? And who obliges you then to make with your lips a profeſſion, which your heart and your life contradict? What is it elſe then but a fond, preſumptuous thoughtleſſneſs, an unjuſtifiable levity, for a man here publicly to declare himſelf a chriſtian, and yet is not one, and has never once formed the honeſt, ſerious reſolution, to do everything in order to become one, and henceforward to aſſert that glorious title in very deed?

It is in the third place levity and want of conſideration, if we flatter ourſelves with chimerical expectations, if we amuſe our fancy with the imaginary poſſeſſion of endowments and diſtinctions, of which we are really deſtitute, and to which we have no juſt pretenſions. And how common too is this failing? We promiſe ourſelves the forgiveneſs of ſins, the favour of God, everlaſting ſalvation. We rely upon all the promiſes of the Eternal. And whereupon with many people is that hope, that reliance built? On the mere attendance on the ſacred ſupper without regard to the ſentiments of their heart or the nature and frame of their conduct. We conſequently imagine, that this outward act of religion abſtractedly conſidered poſſeſſes a marvelous efficacy peculiar to itſelf, of blotting out our ſins, freeing us from the guilt of them and qualifying us for

for eternal ſalvation. We conſequently imagine, that God has ſo great a complacency in the marks of honour that we here ſhew to him and to his ſon Jeſus Chriſt by our words and geſtures, as for that reaſon to pardon all our ſins, even though we intentionally commit and perſiſt in them, abſolve us from all puniſhment, and with all our bad habits and wicked diſpoſitions vouchſafe us his favour. We have already combated theſe extravagant notions and idle expectations as the offspring of ſuperſtition, and now condemn them as the effects of levity. Think not, my pious hearers, that we here fall under the charge of inconſiſtency. Superſtition and levity often produce the ſame peſtilent fruits. They both exclude all reflection from the mind. And this abſence of reflection is the very reaſon, why numbers promiſe themſelves from partaking of the ſacred ſupper ſuch advantages as it either cannot yield them at all, or at leaſt not in their preſent condition, in their preſent temper and ſentiments. I ſubmit it to your own conſideration, my pious hearers, whether God, the omniſcient deity, who requires to be worſhipped in ſpirit and in truth, that is, rationally and ſincerely, can be content with outward acts of worſhip, in which our underſtanding and our heart have no ſhare. Only conſider yourſelves, whether God, the moſt holy God, with whom virtue and integrity paſs for everything, will view with approbation and complacency, a man, whoſe predominant ſentiments and affections are corrupt,

corrupt, and whoſe conduct is not regulated by his will, purely becauſe he ſometimes ſeems to confeſs that his mind and his manners ought to be altered for the better. Do but conſider yourſelves, whether between God, who is pure intellectual light, eſſential reaſon, who is free from all imperfections and failings, and a man, who walks in darkneſs, or is addicted to vice, merely by certain holy rites ſuch a correſpondence can be ſettled or maintained, as muſt ſubſiſt between God and us, if we would challenge to ourſelves a ſubſtantial and everlaſting happineſs. Conſider in your own minds, whether the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine in the ſacred ſupper, accompanied by a few tranſient emotions, can ſuffice for contracting a ſolid, bleſſed union between Jeſus, the holy and juſt, the meek and lowly, the beneficent and placable, the righteous and heavenly minded Jeſus, and a man, who at all other times and on all other occaſions is unjuſt, haughty, vindictive, hard-hearted, implacable, altogether carnally and earthly minded. What is it then, if the man, whoſe mind and manners have nothing evangelical in them, and who even now is not ſeriouſly reſolved and ready to adopt the neceſſary alterations in his temper and behaviour, promiſes himſelf the greateſt benefit from the ordinance of the ſacred ſupper, and contentedly ſoothes his ſoul in the poſſeſſion of it? It is levity and thoughtleſſneſs, that beguile him with falſe imaginations, flatter him with delicious dreams, and prevent him from

from reflecting on thoſe objects, from examining the grounds of his conſolation, his tranquillity and hope, from comparing his pretenſions on the divine clemency and eternal ſalvation with the terms to which God has annexed them, and from learning to expect nothing, without knowing whether he is juſtified in his expectations or not.

It is in the fourth place levity and thoughtleſſneſs, if without compulſion we enter into ſolemn covenants by which we make ourſelves reſponſible for the diſcharge of important, laborious duties, without having previouſly conſidered whether we can and ſhall fulfil them or not. And is not this the predicament in which many chriſtians ſtand in regard to the rite of the ſacred ſupper? How weighty the obligations impoſed on us by this ſolemn act! How virtuous, pure and godly the life which it binds us to lead! How awful the promiſes and vows we here make to the all-knowing and everywhere preſent deity? We here abjure all ſins and iniquities, all evil luſts and paſſions, how natural ſoever they may by long habit be grown, whatever degree of force and authority they may have acquired over us. We bring them all as it were without ſparing to the croſs of Chriſt, as a ſacrifice to him, in teſtimony of our gratitude and attachment. There the proud man promiſes to relinquiſh his pride, the vindictive his revenge, the miſer his avarice, the unchaſte his carnal mind, there every one promiſes to renounce his predominant ſins and failings, and ſo

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to crucify and kill the old man with Chriſt and for his ſake. We here bind ourſelves on the other ſide to be diligent in following after whatſoever things are juſt, equitable, pure, of good report, virtuous and honourable, faithfully to fulfil the ſeveral duties of our ſtation and calling at all times and in all circumſtances, to labour continually at the better, more godly regulation of our heart and our converſation in the world, and zealouſly to contend for the prize of chriſtian perfection. We here openly declare, that we are moved by the mercy of God to ſurrender ourſelves wholly to him, and to uſe all that we are and have according to his good pleaſure, that we are induced by the doctrine of Chriſt, to live no longer to ourſelves, or according to our own private fancies, but in entire conformity with the will of him who died and roſe again for us. We here ſolemnly bind ourſelves to the imitation of Jeſus Chriſt, our lord and ſaviour, to be like minded with him, ſo to walk as he alſo walked, and to ſeek our honour and our fame, in an ever nearer aſſimilation and conformity with him. We here ſolemnly engage to cheriſh true brotherly ſentiments and to hold a true brotherly conduct towards each other. We conſequently renew our vows of a prompt and unlimited obedience to God and to his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, an abſolute ſubmiſſion in proſperity and in adverſity, in life and in death. What obligations, my pious hearers, what vows! What diligence, what zeal, what fortitude, what fidelity are

requiſite for fulfilling what we here promiſe, and for actually performing what we here vow! And ought we to take upon us ſuch obligations without ſerious reflection, without mature deliberation? Should we treat ſuch vows with levity as matters of indifference? No, my friends, if ye make them merely in compliance with cuſtom, if ye make them not with the utmoſt ſerioufneſs of intention, if ye be not ſincerely determined to fulfil them according to your beſt abilities, ye are guilty of treaſon and perjury to God, ye pronounce the ſentence of condemnation on yourſelves, inaſmuch as ye publicly avow your bounden duty and ſolemnly vouch for its performance, and afterwards neither adopt the diſpoſitions nor the conduct agreeable to that recognition and that obligation. Horrible, fatal levity, that makes us hypocrites and perjurers before God, before the God who will one day bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and manifeſt the counſels of the heart! Nay but, my pious hearers, we ſhall be actuated by the profoundeſt reverence for God and his omniſcience, by an ardent aſpiration after probity and virtue, by an undiſſembled hatred to all evil, and a ſincere, effective love of good, here as we renew our engagements to praiſe God with our bodies and our ſouls, and to ſerve and pleaſe him in true holineſs and righteouſneſs all the days of our lives. To us ſhall theſe promiſes be extremely momentous and ſacred, they ſhall be henceforth and for ever the rule of our conduct, a vital principle

in our hearts uniformly inclining us to what is right.

In the laſt place, it is levity, my pious hearers, if inſtead of foſtering the good emotions which we perceive in our breaſts before or at the participation of the ſacred ſupper, and following them, we either ſuppreſs them, or leave them to vaniſh and die away unimproved as they ariſe. Few perſons we may ſuppoſe would aſſiſt at the ſacred ſupper and remain entirely deſtitute of ſome good thoughts, emotions, reſolutions. The ſolemnity of the church ſervice, the exhortation of the miniſter, the prayers, the anthems, all conſpire to attract our attention to the awful doctrines of religion, and to repreſent them as objects that touch us near, that impoſe on us certain duties, and which ſhould have a proper influence on our deportment. If a man be otherwiſe enured to reflection, or have a tender and ſuſceptible heart, nothing is more natural than that during the whole of this tranſaction he ſhould feel ſome good motions riſing within. Frequently the truth appears to him, like a bright ſun-beam darting through his ſoul, in a convincing, captivating form. Often is he ſuddenly ſeized by a ſpark of devotion, which kindles into a gentle fire, pervading and warming the inmoſt receſſes of his breaſt. How often in ſuch happy moments is it ſaid: Yes, God is worthy of my moſt cordial love, of my moſt prompt obedience, of my completeſt confidence. His goodneſs to mankind is infinite, he is eſſential love.

love. Certainly Jeſus is infinitely meritorious in regard to mankind, and therefore even to me. He has done great things for us, he endured the ignominious, painful death of the croſs in our behalf. To him we are beholden for light and conſolation and hope in God and to everlaſting ſalvation. Ah, what do we not owe to this generous friend of man, to this mighty and kind deliverer! What can I then do for him? How can I requite his love? What can I do leſs, than not reſiſt his affectionate views, than not obſtinately continue in that darkneſs, in that ſervitude and miſery from which he ſo fain would deliver me by his doctrine and by his ſpirit? What can I do leſs than yield him my obedience and follow his directions to happineſs? His commandments are by no means grievous, and even were they ever ſo burdenſome, yet could I not refuſe him my ſubmiſſion and my obedience without the blackeſt ingratitude. How beautiful is the pattern of virtue which he has left us! How honourable, how advantageous muſt it be to me, what a noble, felicitous life ſhould I lead by propoſing to myſelf this pattern for imitation, if I followed and reſembled him in ſubmiſſion to the divine will, in meekneſs, in humility, in charity, in beneficence, in general uſefulneſs! — Say, my friends, have not often at the rite of the holy ſupper theſe and the like thoughts, emotions, aſpirations ariſen in your ſouls? Have they not often become vigorous and fervid there? Have ye not been forced to approve

them, and muſt ye not ſtill approve them? But how on the other hand have ye acted? Have ye beſtowed on theſe thoughts and emotions all that attention, which from their importance they deſerve? Have ye arreſted and deeply imprinted them on your hearts? Have ye carried them home with you from the houſe of the Lord? Have ye there rehearſed them with becoming ſerioufneſs and reflected upon them, till they are coaleſced into a firm, decided reſolution in regard to theſe objects? If ye act not thus, my pious hearers, if ye neglect theſe good motions, or reſiſt and ſuppreſs them, if ye immediately run into diſtracting ſocieties, where theſe ſalutary impreſſions are expelled and obliterated to make room for others of a different ſtamp; unleſs ye purſue thoſe tracks of truth and virtue to which this act of worſhip led you, if ye neglect to feed the flame of piety and devotion which here would kindle in your breaſts, in ſhort, if ye here put a ſtop to the farther effects of your good actions and feelings, and if with the attendance on the ſacred rite all is over, ye unqueſtionably in this reſpect incur the guilt of infatuated, criminal levity. From heedleſſneſs and want of reflection, ye neglect concerns that might have tended extremely to your profit. Ye harden by inſenſible degrees your heart to the voice of God and your conſcience. Ye let ſlip the moſt auſpicious hours and moments of your lives, and know not whether any ſuch will again occur in circumſtances ſo advantageous and propitious.

Let

Let us, my pious hearers, who are here aſſembled together for the purpoſe of celebrating the holy ſupper, let us above all things be diligently on our guard againſt all manner of levity and heedleſſneſs. Let us collect our thoughts. Let us fix them entirely on the buſineſs we have in hand. Let us paint to ourſelves in glowing colours, the grand the momentous objects, of which we are here reminded and endeavour to excite and cheriſh in our hearts ſuch emotions, as are ſuited to thoſe ideal images. Let us not ſay from habit, but from conviction, from a lively ſenſe of the importance of the concern: How can I preſent myſelf to God and to his highly exalted ſon, my ſaviour and lord! How ſublime, how conſoling are the objects, that are here repreſented to me and the memorials whereof I am celebrating! How highly deſerving of my utmoſt devotion and fervour! I behold God in the moſt aſtoniſhing and affectionate manner occupied in my ſalvation, I conſider, I worſhip him here, as the father of our lord Jeſus Chriſt, and as my father, who gives up his only begotten ſon for us, and by him proclaims and offers to us pardon, life and never ending felicity. I behold Jeſus Chriſt, the lord of glory, walking amongſt men in the loweſt and moſt deſpicable form, and labouring with unwearied conſtancy at their deliverance, at their improvement and happineſs; I behold him ſubmitting to the moſt cruel ſufferings and enduring the moſt tormenting death of the croſs. I hear him as it

were addreſſing me at his table: As certainly as I died upon the croſs and am riſen again from the dead, ſo certainly mayſt thou promiſe thyſelf the grace of my heavenly father, thy creator and judge, and a bleſſed immortality, if thou accept my goſpel with a lively faith and make my doctrine and my life the rule of thy conduct. Come, tread in my footſteps, do whatever God calls thee to do, and ſuffer whatever he impoſes on thee to ſuffer, as I did and ſuffered it, and perſevere even unto the end, ſo wilt thou arrive at felicity and glory by the way that I arrived thither. Come, make here a public confeſſion of thy faith, thy chriſtian ſentiments and thy hope. Here renounce afreſh thoſe ſins and vices, from which I came into the world to deliver thee, and which alone make thee wretched and unhappy. Come, and reſolve anew to fight againſt iniquity, to fulfil thy duties with fidelity, to proceed onward in virtue and piety, which alone can give peace to thy mind and render thee happy. How important, how reaſonable theſe requeſts! How glorious theſe promiſes! And ſhall not this addreſs of my redeemer, my chieftain and lord, baniſh all levity from my heart? Shall it not fill me with ſeriouſneſs, with reverence, with devotion? How can I worthily teſtify my gratitude to God and to his ſon Jeſus Chriſt? Oh praiſe the Lord, my ſoul, and all that is within me praiſe his holy name! My ſoul does magnify the Lord and my ſpirit rejoices in God my ſaviour! How can I ſufficiently

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prize and glory in the happineſs of being a chriſtian, and of having as ſuch communion with God and his ſon! Praiſe then the Lord with me, all ye who enjoy the ſame felicity, who are my brothers and ſiſters in Chriſt, and let us together extol the greatneſs of his condeſcenſion and mercy. Yes, the Lord has done great things for us, therefore will we rejoice and be glad. But how can I be attentive enough to what I here vow to the Moſt High, to the obligations I here take upon me? How can I be zealous enough to fulfil them? Oh may the love, gratitude, obedience, joy, hope, thoſe genial, bliſsful emotions, with which I am now inſpired, which now ſupply me with motive and energy to dedicate myſelf to God and Jeſus Chriſt and with all my ſoul to take the oath of fidelity and allegiance to him, be deeply impreſſed upon my heart, be firmly united with all my other emotions, revolt in my breaſt whenever I am ſeduced to wickedneſs, whenever I begin to grow indolent in good, whenever I am inclined to forget that I am a chriſtian, appointed to virtue and to a bleſſed immortality! Thus, my friends, will we go to the table of the lord. Thus will we there celebrate the memorials of his love and of our happineſs. Rational reflection, ſerious, continued attention, fervent devotion, ſincere diſpoſitions and views ſhall accompany us thither, animate us while there, and attend us back to our homes: And thus will the veneration which we here pay to Jeſus Chriſt, be agreeable to

him, it will tend to the glory of God the father, and we ſhall derive ſolid uſe and comfort from this act of worſhip. God grant that we may all richly experience it, for the ſake of his eternal love! Amen.

Communion.

SERMON LXIV.

Preparation for Death.

GOD, creator and lord of our lives, without whom we ſhould not be, without whom we could not continue for a moment, on whom our exiſtence, our lives, our deſtinies depend, with thee is the number of our months, the number of the years, of the days, of our ſojourn as ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth. Thou haſt ſet a bound to every one of us, which we cannot paſs. When thou ſayſt: Come again, ye children of men, our body returns to the duſt, from whence it was taken, and our ſpirit to thee, who gaveſt it. And that awful mandate may even to-day go forth to us from thee, in whoſe hands are all our ways, with whom are the iſſues of life and death, and that ſummons no mortal is able to reſiſt. Sooner or later it will certainly be iſſued to us, and then retributions await, then reward or puniſhment awaits us. God, what importance ſhould this idea communicate to our life and our death, to our mortality and our immortality! How terrible would be that ſummons, ſhould it ſurpriſe us unprepared, in an unreformed condition, as ſlaves of ſin and vice, ſhould we then

not

not be and not have done, what we are here appointed to become and to do! What unavailing remorſe, what dreadful proſpects in futurity would in that caſe torment us! Ah God, may however for none of us ſuch ſcenes of anguiſh and terror in the laſt days and hours of life and ſuch a lamentable deſtiny in the future world be prepared! May we all immediately make ready for that important revolution in our ſtate, delay not an inſtant our repentance and converſion, and conſtantly ſo think and live, that we may hereafter cheerfully obey thy ſummons, and paſs into eternity in the ſure and certain hope of a better life! God, we are here met together to meditate on theſe awful concerns with a quiet mind. Bleſs then our meditations. Let them diſperſe our levity, and ſhew us the ſubject in as ſerious a light, as it ought to be ſeen by mortals who are in purſuit of immortality. Oh may the preſent moments be bleſſed and ſoothing to us by the laſting impreſſions they make on us, even in the hour of death! Hear us, merciful Father, and grant our requeſts! We implore it of thee as votaries of thy ſon Jeſus, and addreſs thee further in his name: Our father, &c.

ISAIAH XXXVIII. 1.

Thus ſaith the Lord: Set thine houſe in order; for thou ſhalt die.

SHOULD an angel, my pious hearers, or a prophet, of whoſe divine miſſion we had no doubt, bring to us the ſame meſſage, which Iſaiah in our

text delivered to king Hezekiah; if we heard him ſay to us in a ſolemn tone of voice: Thus ſaith the Lord, the Allpowerful, the maſter of thy life and thy deſtinies, ſet thy houſe in order, for thou ſhalt die, this ſickneſs will terminate in thy death, this week will be the laſt week of thy life upon earth, this day thy laſt day, ſet thy affairs immediately in order, make ready without delay for the greateſt, the moſt important change, that can happen to thee: what impreſſion would this meſſage make upon us? The diſtreſs into which it would throw the greater part of us in caſting about for comfort and deliverance, would be perhaps not leſs than that felt by the jewiſh monarch. How many perhaps like him would in the anguiſh of their hearts chatter like a crane and mourn as a dove! How few would perhaps receive theſe unwelcome tidings without diſmay and proceed with calmneſs and compoſure to comply with the meſſage! How gladly however ſhould we do all that lay in our power in order to alleviate this ſad but unavoidable proceſs, and paſs with eaſe into a better, bliſsful life! Men, chriſtians, are we then in want of a meſſenger from the courts of heaven, or the warning voice of a prophet, for informing us, that we are mortal, that we are not ſure of the continuance of our life for one moment, that every day, every hour may be the laſt to us? Does not now our own experience, now that of others, does not the frail and periſhable nature of all ſurrounding objects, daily call aloud to

us:

us: Set thine houſe in order, for thou ſhalt die; the longeſt life upon earth is ſhort, and but few attain to the extreme term of it? And as chriſtians know we not with equal certainty, my dear friends, that the conſequences of death are moſt ſerious and exceedingly different, that it will hereafter appear to us in a tremendous or in a ſoothing form, that it will tranſlate us into a happy or into an unhappy ſtate! And therefore under this extreme uncertainty of our life, ought we not to make ourſelves ready for it without delay! Should we not prepare ourſelves for ſuch an awful change in our condition! In what however may this preparation for death conſiſt? How are we in this view to ſet our houſe in order? What is that frame of mind, what that ſort of conduct which can deprive death of his terrors and make him to us a harbinger of peace? To inform you of this and excite you to it, my pious hearers, is the purport of my preſent diſcourſe. Accept it, employ it in ſuch manner as behoves men who are daily in danger of death, who ſoon or late will moſt aſſuredly die, and who wiſh to die comfortably and happily.

Preparation for death conſiſts not, my pious hearers, in abandoning the affairs of our calling, throwing off all connections with others, bidding adieu to all innocent gratifications, in retiring from human converſe, and ſhutting ourſelves up in the ſolitude of a cell and paſſing our days in barren and unprofitable ſpeculation, in praying and reading, in meditations

meditations on death, in ſolemn exerciſes of devotion or in auſtere penances and mortifications. It conſiſts not in viſiting the manſions of the dead more than the manſions of the living, in traverſing the dark and noiſome vault where mortality dwells in the pomp of ruin, in meditating among the tombs, in following the triumphs, the traces of death and corruption, and as it were wrapping ourſelves in a winding ſheet and all the beauties of nature in the ſable garb of woe. It conſiſts not in daily and hourly as it were delineating to our minds in vivid flaſhes of imagination the awful ſcene of bidding a laſt farewell to relatives and friends and all connection with the living world, in rehearſing the pangs and convulſions that will probably precede the diſſolution of the human form, in piercing the funereal gloom, prying into the ſecrets of the charnel-houſe, viewing the fallen body in all the periods of its decay, the mouldering and crumbling and numberleſs tranſmutations of the conſtituent parts of this earthly tabernacle, the loneſome, obſcure and ſilent ſojourn in the ſepulchre, in calling up to the fancy the region of ſhadows, the land of forgetfulneſs, the wide dominion of the dead, when the long night has cloſed over the azure ſky in its darkeſt and deepeſt ſhade, and making theſe ſad ideas the conſtant companions of our lives. This would withdraw us from life altogether; and by indiſpoſing us for its buſineſs and enjoyments, would be inconſiſtent with the true end of our creation, with the views

views of the creator, who has appointed us to a ſocial and buſy life. How contumaciouſly and ungratefully ſhould we thus act, in cloſing up thoſe ſources of ſatisfaction and pleaſure which our benign father in heaven has opened and prepared for our uſe on the earth! How could we then be elated in life? How fulfil its duties? How enjoy its goods and accommodations? How patiently and reſolutely bear its troubles? And how ſoon would both mind and body ſink beneath ſuch gloomy ideas, and be immerſed in a ſtate of total inaction and inſenſibility, or in corroding ſorrow and grief! No, ſuch a preparation for death is not ſuggeſted to us by reaſon; ſuch notions of it have no foundation in the word of God. Thou ſhouldſt indeed, o man, in purſuance of their advice, never be unmindful of thy mortality, frequently conſider thy latter end, whether in thy ſolitary walks or in the ſilent hour of night, when deep ſleep falleth on man, when midnight cloſes awful all the world, and nought in nature is awake but God and thee, think over the terrors of that houſe which is appointed for all living; never entirely baniſh theſe ſerious thoughts from thy mind, but make thyſelf thoroughly familiar with them and by the light of religion diveſt them of that gloomy, terrifying aſpect, in which apart from that celeſtial comforter they cannot fail to appear. But we ſhould chiefly endeavour to preſerve ſuch a temper of mind and to purſue ſuch a conduct, as may be conſolatory and ſoothing when we

we are drawing towards the term of our earthly career, when our feet ſtumble on the dark mountains and the ſhadows of the everlaſting evening begin to cloſe over our head and we deſcry the ſtate of retribution before us. This is the beſt, the ſafeſt preparation for death. Thus may we, thus ſhould we be conſtantly preparing and making ourſelves ready for that momentous event. This may however be done without any anxiety, it may be done with good humour, with gaiety of mind, it is conſiſtent with the diſcharge of every duty, with the enjoyment of every harmleſs gratification, it promotes our preſent as well as our future contentment and happineſs.

Yes, my pious hearers, all that belongs to a rational and chriſtian preparation for death may be comprized in this general precept: Immediately put away, and uniformly avoid, whatever has a tendency to diſquiet, terrify, diſturb thee in death, and practiſe now and henceforth whatever may tend to ſoothe, to conſole, to ſtrengthen, to refreſh thee in that ſolemn hour. Let us next proceed to examine ſomewhat more particularly what we have in this deſign to avoid and to do.

Wouldſt thou then prepare for death, my chriſtian brother, wouldſt thou put thyſelf in ſuch a frame as to be able calmly to wait his arrival; ſet thine houſe in order firſt by adjuſting thy temporal concerns, by thinking and determining, what diſpoſition ſhould be made after thy death of thy property,

perty, and of all whereof the uſe and management is not indifferent to thee, and over which thou haſt a legitimate diſpoſing power. Haſt thou hitherto neglected this buſineſs from careleſſneſs or from the groundleſs apprehenſion of thereby accelerating thy latter end, do it at preſent, however young, or healthy thou mayſt be, however long thou mayſt yet hope to live. And as often as any remarkable alterations enſue in thy outward circumſtances, thy relations and connections with others, compare the arrangements thou haſt made with them, and alter them according as theſe freſh circumſtances require. At preſent thou canſt certainly do it, but how uncertain is it, whether thou wilt be able to do it in the laſt days or hours of thy life! At preſent thou canſt do it calmly and with all due deliberation and regard to equity; but then perhaps will debility of mind, palpitation of heart, pains of body, a mournful circle of friends and attendants about thy bed, or other diſtracting circumſtances oblige thee to overlook many things, to make falſe eſtimates of others, and to perform ſome contrary to thy inclination. And how much diſcord, how many fatal diſputes and controverſies, how much implacable rage and bitterneſs which a tedious and uncertain trial at law never fails to create and inflame, how many ſins and iniquities mayſt thou not thereby prevent! What uneaſineſs, what cares mayſt thou ſpare thyſelf in thy dying moments! How much leſs reaſon wilt thou then have to be afraid of a ſudden death,

death, and how much eaſier will it be at thy approaching diſſolution, to turn all thy attention upon thyſelf, upon thy moral condition, upon God and futurity!

Wouldſt thou farther prepare for death, o man, wouldſt thou put thyſelf at preſent in that ſtate in which thou needſt not to dread his arrival, comply with the terms, on which God promiſes thee pardon, forgiveneſs of ſins, life and felicity, and comply with them immediately, leſt death ſhould ruſh upon thee unawares, and aſſail thee with all his terrors. Haſt thou ſinned; repent and amend without delay, that thy ſins may not then torment thee and then not threaten thee with puniſhment, when thou haſt neither time to reform, nor opportunity and means to prove in very deed the ſincerity of thy repentance and amendment. Art thou ſtill under the dominion of any vice, force thyſelf from the infamous bonds in which thou art enthralled, renounce thy evil luſt, thy ſinful paſſion, thy illicit connection, thy perverſe propenſity, that thou mayſt not then feel the whole miſery of that bondage and ſlavery, when thou haſt no longer any power to caſt off their galling yoke, and riſe to liberty. Seek now to place thyſelf in the proper relations and habitudes towards God, thy ſovereign and judge; learn to know and to revere him as the friend and father of the univerſe; learn to love him, to rejoice in him, to obey him, to centre all thy hopes, to put thy whole truſt and confidence in him: that the

thought of him may not then be dreadful, but conſoling to thee, that even in death thou mayſt reſign thyſelf to him with filial confidence, and promiſe thyſelf from him every good that infinite benignity and wiſdom can contrive and almighty power can beſtow. — Open at preſent all the avenues of thy heart to chriſtian ſentiments and virtues, exerciſe and confirm thyſelf in them progreſſively more from day to day, that they may not then refuſe thee their aſſiſtance, when thou art moſt in need of comfort and refreſhment, that they may teach thee to overcome all the terrors of death and the grave. Call thyſelf often to account, judge thyſelf, and that with the utmoſt impartiality and rigour, that thou need not then to be afraid of being judged and condemned by thy own conſcience and at the judgment-ſeat of God. Make religion at preſent thy moſt valued friend, thy conſtant companion on the journey of life, that ſhe may not then retire from thee, or be a terror to thy mind, but thy comforter, thy guide along the dark and dreary ſtrait of death. To be brief, do that now, which ſuch numbers intend to do but not till the laſt days or hours of their life, and for which they will then have neither time nor ſtrength. Secure to thyſelf at preſent by repentance and amendment, by a virtuous, pious life the favour and complacency of God and the hope of future felicity; and when thou art ſure of theſe, when thou haſt once ſettled theſe ſerious concerns, when thou haſt a propitious God, a quiet conſcience, a

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corrected, pious heart, when thou haſt a capacity for the enjoyment of a ſuperior, more bleſſed life, then will death never come upon thee unprepared, then mayſt thou without any anxiety about farther preparation boldly anſwer to his ſummons, in whatever place, at whatever time, in whatever circumſtances he may direct it to thee.

If thirdly thou wouldſt prepare for death, if thou wouldſt cauſe the evening of thy days to ſmile, and the ſtream of life to run clear to the end, moderate thy attachment to earthly and viſible things. Nothing arms death, inaſmuch as he puts a period to the preſent ſcene, with more terrors than an exceſſive attachment to the buſineſs or the pleaſures of the world. He that is entirely immerſed in them, that lets them occupy and engroſs his whole attention; he that ſeeks no other happineſs than what the world can yield; he that places his eſteem and affection on periſhable objects, as though they were incorruptible; he that relies upon the arm of fleſh, fixes his dependance on mortal man, as though he were not mortal: what will he do when God calls him hence; how will his cloſing eye contemplate the pomp and glitter of life, the evil of avarice, the turmoil of ambition, and all that round of vanity with which he is now enchanted? How can he without anguiſh and terror behold the moment approach, when time and earth and day and pleaſure fly from every ſenſe, the moment that ſevers him for ever from all that he holds moſt dear?

What hard ſtruggles muſt it coſt him to part with thoſe objects to which he clings ſo cloſe, and which he has in a manner made neceſſary, eſſential parts of himſelf! Therefore moderate your attachment to earthly things, uſe this world, as not abuſing it; let not the buſineſs or the pleaſures of it take hold of your heart, make them not eſſential to your happineſs, ſit looſe to them, remember that the faſhion of this world paſſes away, and that death ſoon drops the curtain to the ſcene, which no wiſe man would wiſh to laſt for ever. Therefore, while ſtill in the prime of life, in the full enjoyment of your health and faculties, your friends and your poſſeſſions, moderate even then your attachment to earthly and viſible things. You promiſe yourſelves a length of happy days, and think that ſober and grave reflections on mortality are ill-ſuited to the bloom of your years and the gaiety of your ſpirits. Let the old, you ſay, think upon death; let thoſe who are drawing nigh to the grave, prepare for that better world to which they are advancing; but ſure it is the duty of the young and gay to make the moſt of life. — True; and in order to make the moſt of life, you muſt conquer the fear of death. The king of terrors, when not ſubdued, is the moſt formidable of all foes. In every path of life he will meet you, and haunt you like a ghoſt. Even at the banquet his form will appear: he will blaſt you in the midſt of your joy, and turn the houſe of mirth into a houſe of mourning. Preſume not upon forbearance from

from the deſtroyer. Never promiſe thyſelf more from tranſitory things, than they are able to afford. Seek not thy principal, thy permanent happineſs there, where never yet any mortal has found it and none will ever find it. Let no ties entangle thee, which will hereafter be diſſolved, and the diſſolution whereof muſt the more cruelly pain thee, more mangle thy apprehenſive tendereſt parts the more intimately they have been implicated as it were in thy whole maſs of exiſtence, intermingled with all thy joys and ſorrows, thy views and expectations. Never forget the inconſtancy and the frailty of all terreſtrial objects. Pluck the flowers thou meeteſt on the journey of life, but require not that they ſhould never fade. Enjoy the innocent gratifications that offer themſelves to thee, but indulge not the fond hope that they will laſt for ever. Sometimes figure to thy mind the always poſſible, probably near, and ſooner or later inevitable privation of all theſe objects. Begin thy purſuit betimes, continue inceſſantly to purſue attainments, diſtinctions, ſatisfactions, that may compenſate their loſs and which are of perennial duration. Indulge not indolent repoſe: up, up, thou traveller, this is not thy reſt. No, here is not the place of my deſtination, here I have no abiding city, here I am only a ſtranger and ſojourner, here I walk amongſt fleeting forms and ſhadows, trample on the aſhes of my brethren, on the ruins of the former world, poſſeſs only tranſitory goods, enjoy only tranſient delights, act only upon mortal beings, am mortal myſelf, am today and perhaps

tomorrow ſhall be no more. Here all is teeming with prodigious changes and revolutions, all is ſubject to diſſolution. No, the abode of truth is in a loftier region; the place of my deſtination, my real country is in the heavens. I am born from above; I derive my deſcent from the everlaſting father, and retain a conſcious ſenſe of my divine original, my home is the country of eternal day, of clear unclouded light. Thither will I tend, for that will I qualify myſelf. In regard to what is earthly, I will ſo rejoice in it as though I rejoiced not, ſo be diſturbed at it as though I were not diſturbed, and ſo uſe the world as though I uſed it not. Yes, make thyſelf familiar with theſe thoughts, o thou who wouldſt prepare for the cloſing ſcene of thy life. This will make thee indifferent neither to thy poſſeſſions, nor to thy pleaſures, nor to thy friends; but thou wilt learn to hold them for what they are, for entruſted goods, for unſtable, fleeting pleaſures, for mortal friends; and then, when they are demanded back by him who lent them to thee, it will be the leſs ſurpriſing, the leſs alarming to thee, the leſs thou hadſt laid thy account in an undiſturbed or long poſſeſſion of them. If the voluptuary at his death feels the pangs of one who is torn from his country, his family and friends, from all that he reveres and loves, thou, more wiſely determined, wilt only feel, what the traveller feels, who ſets out from an inn, where he has made a ſhort, but agreeable ſtay, to proſecute his journey home.

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Wouldſt thou prepare for death, wouldſt thou put thyſelf in that frame and temper of mind, which may enable thee manfully to expect it, beware fourthly above all things, of whatever may diſquiet thee in the hour of death, whatever would then torment thee with upbraidings and fruitleſs remorſe. Think, ſpeak, do nothing, which thou wouldſt then wiſh thou hadſt not thought, not ſpoken, not done. Engage in no affairs, in no undertakings, in no connections, which thou then couldſt not approve, or of which thou then muſt be aſhamed. Enjoy no ſatisfaction, no pleaſure which thou ſhouldſt then not recollect without confuſion and remorſe. Reject every advantage, every poſſeſſion, every treaſure, which thou wilt then be forced to own was unlawfully acquired. Beware of injuring, of wronging, of oppreſſing, of corrupting thy brethren, or of rendering them by any means wretched and unhappy, that in the ſolemn hour of death theſe injured, theſe oppreſſed, theſe corrupt, theſe miſerable beings may not preſent themſelves to thy affrighted mind, and haraſs thee with accuſations and reproaches. Burden not thy ſoul with the ſighs of the widow and orphan, with the tears of the poor and needy, with the lamentations of the diſtreſſed, that in thy dying moments their voice may not be lifted up againſt thee in menaces of puniſhment and vengeance. Beware of wilfully violating the ſacred obligations of a ſpouſe, of a father, a mother of a family, of a friend, of a ſubject; beware of being

the ſeducer, the corrupter of thy family and dependants, or by thy negligence and miſconduct of weakening and undermining their welfare, if thou wouldſt not be afflicted at the ſight and the preſence of them in thy laſt hours, if thou wouldſt avoid the agonies it will then bring upon thee. Be blameleſs therefore and harmleſs in the general tenor of your life. Keep a conſcience void of offence towards God and towards man. Let not the ſun go down upon one unrepented ſin. Make it your buſineſs every night to review the actions of the foregoing day. If through the frailty of nature or the force of temptation you have ſinned againſt God, proſtrate yourſelves before the throne of grace, aſk pardon through Chriſt. As you would not wiſh to yourſelves diſtreſs and anguiſh and tribulation at the day of death; as you would not wiſh to bring down your grey hairs with ſorrow to the grave, beware of perſiſting in a courſe of unrepented ſin. Let me remind you, that a good life is the beſt preparation for death. You may lay it down as a maxim confirmed by univerſal experience, that every man dies as he lives; and it is by the general tenour of life, not a particular frame of mind at the hour of death, that we are to be judged at the tribunal of heaven. Regulate your life then in ſuch a manner, that you may not be pained at the retroſpect of it, that you may not be tormented by ſuch thoughts as theſe: Surrounded by the ſad circle of my friends and attendants, I read in their trembling looks that all

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is over with me, that my hour is come. And what is become of my life, I have waſted, ſquandered, fooled it away in follies and ſins; and now all the loſt days and hours of my life riſe up in judgment againſt me: what have I left but the unavailing wiſh that they would return, they are loſt to me, for ever loſt; now am I forced to eat the bitter fruit of my follies and ſins. As thou wouldſt wiſh that theſe thoughts ſhould not one day torment thee, o man, conſider at preſent all that thou doſt or doſt not, in that point of view, in which it will then appear to thee. Commune with thyſelf: How ſhall I then judge of earthly things, how be diſpoſed towards them, when I am about to leave them and to give an account to the judge of the world of the uſe I have made of them? How ſhall I then view and judge of this gratification, this pleaſure, this advantage, this enterpriſe, this action, when the cold ſweat and ſhivering limbs and faltering voice inform me that death is at hand, when I am ſtanding on the threſhold of eternity, when the illuſion vaniſhes that was ſpread upon all terreſtrial excellence, all outward diſtinctions, all luxury and pomp, when I am paſſing into that ſtate, where every one ſhall be recompenſed according to his works? What ſhall I then wiſh to have done or not done? He who thus communes with himſelf, my dear friends, while yet in the vigour of life, in the ſunſhine of proſperity, even now contemplates the objects of ſenſe and the actions of men with the ſober diſcern-

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ment and the impartial view of a dying man, how juſtly will he judge! How rationally and wiſely chuſe! How virtuouſly act! How much tormenting, fruitleſs remorſe will he ſpare himſelf! What an unſpotted conſcience, what calm repoſe, what a cheerful review of his paſt life will he lay up for himſelf at his laſt hour!

Wouldſt thou fifthly prepare for the arrival of death, my chriſtian brother, wouldſt thou put thyſelf in that frame of mind, in which thou mayſt expect it undiſmayed, do at preſent, do conſtantly all that has a tendency to ſoothe and cheer thee then. Make it thy buſineſs during the whole courſe of thy life, to treaſure up thoſe ſeveral ſatisfactions which are adapted to refreſh and to cheer thee in death: the ſatisfaction of duty faithfully fulfilled, the ſatisfaction of righteouſneſs and mercy, the ſatisfaction of remarkable progreſs in good and advancement towards perfection, the ſatisfaction of an innocent, virtuous, godly life. If theſe ſatisfactions hover round thy death-bed and ſoothe thy dying heart, how eaſy will it be to thee to chaſe away the terrors of death and the grave! How grateful will they render the retroſpect of the paſt and how hopeful the proſpect of the future! Yes, my dear friends, what a comfort, what a joy muſt it then be, to have diſcharged our obligations, worthily maintained our poſt, faithfully executed our truſt, completed our taſk and all this in ſuch a manner, that, notwithſtanding the ſenſe of our failings and imperfections,

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we may aſſure ourſelves of the approbation and complacency of that God, who enjoined us thoſe duties, aſſigned us that poſt, committed to us that truſt, ſet us that taſk! What a comfort, what a joy muſt it then be to us, to ſee our children, dependants, ſcholars, friends around us, whom we have trained to wiſdom and to virtue, whom we have taught to know and to love God, whom we have conducted to the path of happineſs and encouraged in purſuing it, whom we have preceded with the light of our example, as a pattern to follow, in whoſe hearts we have thus erected a monument more durable than braſs! What a comfort, what a joy muſt it then be, to recollect with humble gratitude to God, the many poor that we have relieved, the many wretched and forlorn whom we have ſuccoured, the many mourners whom we have comforted, the many wanderers whom we have reclaimed, the many weak whom we have ſupported, the many good, uſeful inſtitutions that we have encouraged, and to enjoy already by anticipation the fruits that we are now about to reap from our humanity, from our charity! Oh how eaſy, how pleaſant muſt this render a man's paſſage into the future ſtate of being! How qualified for it muſt he be, on having accumulated a fund of ſuch comforts, ſuch joys, every day, every hour of his life! Wherefore be diligent in collecting, in preparing for thyſelf ſuch conſolations and joys, as thou wouldſt wiſh hereafter to die with ſerenity of mind and tranquillity

tranquillity of heart. Let it make thy zeal in righteouſneſs and mercy every day leſs liable to wax cold. Say to thyſelf, when tempted to indolence: Nay but this good, pious act, this work of chriſtian charity, this ſacrifice for others will however rejoice me on my death-bed! What I now do or ſuffer from the love of God and man, will then ſoothe and refreſh me, when neither riches, nor the pleaſures of ſenſe, nor mortal man can cheer and conſole me more! No, the laſt ſcene of my life is too ſerious and its conſequences too momentous, for me to neglect purpoſely anything that has a tendency then to revive and refreſh my drooping ſpirits.

Wouldſt thou finally, o man, prepare for that ſolemn ſcene and manfully ſee its approach, make thyſelf previouſly always more acquainted and converſant with thoſe maxims of wiſdom and religion which ſhew thee death in the proper point of view and tend to deprive him of his terrors. Learn to know him in that form, which he wears in the eyes of the wiſe man and the chriſtian, in that form which Jeſus has given him by his goſpel and by his reſurrection from the dead. In any other form he is unqueſtionably of all horrible objects the moſt horrible: the deſtroyer of life, of joy, of happineſs, the termination of exiſtence, or the harbinger of a long, lengthening, viewleſs ſucceſſion of woe. Yes, to the man who knows not God, from whom the true deſign of his creation is concealed, to whoſe eyes futurity ſpreads dark and dreary round him, who

who goes onward to the tomb as to his everlaſting abode; to the man entirely depraved by ſins and iniquities, and who trembles at the idea of a judgment and a ſtate of retribution, to him death muſt appear in the moſt terrific form. But to the wiſe man, to the chriſtian this is not the form he wears. To him he preſents himſelf as the eſcort to a ſuperior, better life, as the conductor to greater perfection. To him he appears as the meſſenger of peace, who puts an end to all the troubles and afflictions, the inconveniences and temptations of life, to all the conflicts with himſelf and the world, and leads him to reſt, to triumph, to the reward of his fidelity, to the enjoyment of more refined ſatisfactions and happineſs. To him he brings the gracious ſummons of his heavenly father, which calls him to him, to his nearer intercourſe, from his toilſome and dangerous pilgrimage to his abiding home. From him death raviſhes nothing for which he will not be more than indemnified. Him he ſeparates not for ever from what really merited his eſteem and affection. To him he holds out no menace of an auſtere judge, of any puniſhment, of any miſery. To his view he unfolds the moſt brilliant proſpects in that kingdom whoſe foundations are on the everlaſting hills, the kingdom of light, of love, of felicity. Him he conveys to the captain of his ſalvation, who once died and roſe again from the dead for him, and who is now lord of both the living and the dead, and gathers to him all thoſe who have reſigned themſelves

ſelves to his guidance to make them partakers in his life and in his glory. As thou wouldſt then have death to appear to thee in this deſirable form, as thou wouldſt make thyſelf ready for his arrival as for the arrival of a friend, be from the bottom of thy heart a chriſtian, make thyſelf continually better acquainted with the doctrines of chriſtianity, ſtrengthen thy faith more and more in its promiſes, form thyſelf more completely upon its ſpirit from day to day, adhere always more cloſely to Jeſus, thy precurſor and guide, gain daily a nearer aſſimilation with him, then wilt thou have in him a powerful protector in death and in the unſeen world, then wilt neither anxiouſly dread the loſs of the present nor the obſcurities of the future, and triumphantly exclaim with his votaries: Death, where is thy ſting? Grave, where is thy victory? Death is ſwallowed up in victory. Thanks be to God, who has given us the victory through our lord Jeſus Chriſt!

This, my dear friends, is the proper method of ſetting our houſe in order, of preparing and making ready for death. Thus ſhould our whole life be a conſtant, manly preparation for death. Have we ſettled our temporal affairs; have we fulfilled the conditions, whereon God promiſes us pardon, forgiveneſs of ſins and eternal felicity; do we moderate our attachment to what is terreſtrial and tranſitory; do we regularly avoid whatever might diſturb us in the hour of death, and torment us with reproaches

and remorſe; do we diligently purſue always whatever may then ſoothe and refreſh us; do we ſtudy as chriſtians to contemplate death from the proper point of view and to hold it for that, which it is: then let the awful mandate iſſue forth from the almighty arbiter of life and death, let the voice: Set thine houſe in order; thou muſt die, reſound in our ears, ſooner or later, today or tomorrow, while engaged in our acts of devotion, or in the affairs of our calling, or in our pleaſures, ſhould theſe eyes never open upon the light of another day, it will be never formidable to us, never ruſh upon us unawares, never go forth to us at an inconvenient hour, always ſhall we be able manfully to obey the ſummons, to advance to the tomb with that grace and decorum which become our rational and immortal nature, and preſs onward through death into life eternal. Amen.

ON

THE CHARACTER

OF

ZOLLIKOFER,

IN A LETTER FROM

Mr. CHRISTIAN GARVE,

TO A FRIEND AT LEIPSIC.

I SIT down to recreate my mind with the lively recollections of a worthy friend whom I have loſt, in hopes of preſenting to my view, and if I ſucceed, to that of the public, a faithful delineation of his character. What is more natural, than to direct my thoughts on this occaſion to another friend *, whom I ſtill poſſeſs, who loved equally with myſelf the former of whom I am bereaved, who knew him longer than I did, and who firſt brought about the union between him and me? In devoting this ſketch immediately to you, my dear Weiſſe, I deprive the meditations that will neceſſarily engage my thoughts of ſome portion of their melancholy impreſſion on my ſoul, and at the ſame time I encourage myſelf with the hopes of rendering the likeneſs as correct as poſſible. On one hand I conſider that I have yet a friend, who is likewiſe generally allowed to poſſeſs eminent qualities both of mind and heart. In him I have on the other a competent judge of this my attempt: and I ſhall exert myſelf ſo much the more, to adhere ſtrictly to the truth, as the picture I draw is firſt to be preſented to one who knew the original ſo well. —

* Mr. Chriſtian Felix Weiſſe, receiver general of the taxes for the circle of Upper Saxony, well known by his numerous works of erudition and taſte.

It is not my intention to meddle with the biography of Zollikofer, as being too imperfectly known to me, and as the worthy editor of his poſthumous writings appointed by himſelf is far better qualified for the taſk. I ſhall confine myſelf ſolely to what I have been able to gather from my perſonal intercourſe with him and from the diligent peruſal of his writings, concerning the peculiarities of his genius and of his character.

All the qualities of this man partook ſomewhat of privacy and retirement, but were therefore the more ſubſtantial. In his exterior no one in particular of his good qualities was diſcernible to any extraordinary degree; but only the reſult of all, — ſedateneſs and compoſure. He felt deeply, and had a cold appearance. He thought much, and was taciturn. He was extremely benevolent, and not obtruſive in his kindneſs. The ſuperficial obſerver ſaw nothing in him except a certain decorum, which inſpired reſpect, but announced no great internal activity. On a cloſer inſpection his mind was ſeen to be ever at work, and his heart conſtantly agitated by lively emotions and even by paſſions.

Into what a profound melancholy did Zollikofer fall on the death of his firſt wife! How thoroughly was he captivated by the new riſing affection! Who would have ſuſpected in him ſuch a tender ſuſceptibility of heart?

Thus likewiſe burnt inwardly the fire of friendſhip, though it rarely burſt out into a flame. He could

could paſs a long time without entertaining a wiſh to ſee the perſons he dearly loved; he could, in their abſence, endure a long ſuſpenſion of all epiſtolary correſpondence between them. But he was all the while ready to do them the moſt laborious ſervices; and, whenever he was called upon, applied his utmoſt zeal and ability, to their benefit or their pleaſure.

Such were all his paſſions, even his thirſt of knowledge: in their outward appearances moderate, calm, bordering on coldneſs; but in their intrinſic efficacy vehement, laſting and continued.

Nobody that I was ever yet acquainted with, has had that conſiſtency of character which Cicero before all things requires of a virtuous man, in ſo eminent a degree as Zollikofer. With what is called humour or caprice he was totally unacquainted. Neither his countenance nor his demeanour ſhewed any alteration one day more than another. He was not at one viſit converſible and attentive, at another abſent and penſive; He was not found at one time diſpoſed to effuſions of the heart, at another time to reſerve. At all times he was the ſame, always in the middle way, always under the government of reaſon, always in a certain equipoiſe of his affections.

This was owing in a great meaſure to his being free from the ambition of ſhining on the ſpot by any of his good qualities. He ſeemed never to make it the ſubject of his thoughts how he might appear to

others: he was only intent on what he was determined to be. When he had nothing more to ſay, he thought it no diſgrace to be ſilent. He never held it his duty to be laviſh in complaiſance on every occaſion: but if in the courſe of the converſation, any true ſentiment occurred which at the ſame time might prove agreeable, he uttered it with propriety and evident complacency.

Perſons, who are fond of being every day in company, and make a buſineſs of converſation, would find ſuch a man not ſufficiently entertaining. They are wont to regard it as an important duty of ſociety, never to let the converſation flag. Without doubt that ſprightlineſs of mind is an additional perfection, which allows the man of buſineſs even in his hours of relaxation a certain effort to become agreeable to others, without detriment to the exertion required in the tranſaction of his affairs. Even the deſire of pleaſing, if it do not exceed the proper bounds, inaſmuch as it renders a man more alert in contributing to the pleaſure of others, may be conſidered as a merit. — On the other hand it is equally true, that a man, who like Zollikofer appears before the public, and acquires the approbation and gratitude of the whole ſociety in which he lives, by his uſeful labours, can more eaſily diſpenſe with the petty gratifications of ambition which his capacities would procure him in more contracted aſſemblies, if he took the pains to diſplay them. — However, as this feature of Zollikofer's character

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was connected with the reſt of his behaviour: we may ſafely admit it as the ſign of a mind at eaſe, above the ſway of ſordid paſſions, which is then only briſkly moved, when it has ſome object to attain, and ſubſides into reſt when it has nothing to expect that is worthy of it.

It has never been my fortune to take notice of a perſon who had arrived at equal perfection with Zollikofer in his thoughts and in his labours. There was in him an argumentative mind, a talent of nice diſcernment in matters relating to human actions and failings; a ſound and vigorous judgment; the faculty of unfolding his thoughts with perſpicuity; the talent of a really exquiſite taſte in literary compoſition. But theſe ſeveral capacities were not completely expanded by the education he received. His ſtudies and his models were not the moſt perfect. The firſt ſermons that I heard him deliver, compoſed in his early years, ſtill retained ſome borrowed ideas, not of his own original conception, — a verboſe manner of expreſſion. They always differed from the general run of pulpit diſcourſes; but they did not fix the attention, — did not yield information in the ſame degree as Zollikofer was capable of fixing the attention and of giving information. Yet even then his ſermons improved upon me from year to year both in matter and in delivery, in genius and in diction. Since the time of my firſt intimacy with him, when I conſequently began to obſerve him more cloſely, how much more abundant was

his moral inſtruction become, how much purer and more compreſſed his ſtyle. — This cultivation of his genius he never ceaſed to continue till the laſt day of his life.

In his moral character the progreſs was leſs diſcernible, becauſe in fact he was even early in life near to that perfection which his nature was able to reach, and becauſe in general a man's character and the little alterations in it are not ſo ſtriking to others, as the endowments of his mind. Nevertheleſs thoſe who had for a ſeries of years been attentive to Zollikofer, muſt have found I believe, that his gravity was more and more mingled with tenderneſs, his ſtern principles with gentle emotions: that though he retained all the original ſolidity of his character, he however became gradually more affable, pleaſant and alert.

It is not the buſineſs of a public teacher to inveſtigate truths from their primitive elements, but to deliver, to illuſtrate and to carry home to the heart of his hearers, thoſe which are acknowledged by all reaſonable perſons, or muſt be immediately acknowledged whenever the meaning of them is once comprehended, — and which at the ſame time are of practical utility. Notwithſtanding, he who after having explored nature in her inmoſt receſſes, returns from the reſearch with a mind unclouded by ſcepticiſm, is beſt qualified to deliver to others with inconteſtible evidence and in the proper point of view the doctrines of wiſdom and virtue that manifeſt

manifeſt themſelves more on the ſurface. Zollikofer ſtudiouſly avoided in his ſermons all inquiries that were too abſtruſe for vulgar apprehenſion, or for the aſſumptive habits of thought and reflection in the generality of hearers. But we perceive from the force and perſpicuity, with which he delivers the popular ſubjects of morality, that he had inveſtigated them in their firſt rudiments. He did not trouble his audience with doubts, a practice which never fails to unſettle the conviction of the unlearned, even if they are not thoroughly underſtood, whereas the miſchief can only be repaired, by the ſolution when it is perfectly comprehended. But that his own perſpicacity in religion and morality was connected with the knowledge of the difficulties that appear on diving into them, or from the attacks which in every age they have ſuſtained, is evident from his giving that appropriateneſs of expreſſion to his arguments and that diverſity to his proofs, which could only reſult from having previouſly pondered the arguments on both ſides.

Few preachers before him ever ventured to introduce into the pulpit ſuch ſpecific relations, duties, faults, uſages, pleaſures of domeſtic and ſocial life: ſtill fewer have had the art of handling them at the ſame time with ſuch dignity, with ſuch fertility in important inſtruction, with ſo natural a reference to religion, as Zollikofer. His morality is not, as has ſo often been ſaid of the precepts of perſons of his claſs, proper for the pulpit but impracticable

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in the world, and uſeleſs in the commerce of life. He diſtinguiſhed the good that were to be wiſhed, from the good that is to be expected in the preſent conſtitution of the world and amid the actual circumſtances of ſociety; and furniſhes directions how the latter is to be attained, and the former approached. In morals nothing is eaſier than to lay down the duties of mankind in general: nothing more difficult than to enumerate the various circumſtances whereby theſe duties are limited, and the impediments that lie in the way of their accompliſhment; — to underſtand the peculiarities of the ſeveral ſtations in ſociety, ſo as to advert to the particular propenſities of the perſons belonging to each, the temptations to which they are expoſed, the motives that make the deepeſt impreſſion on them, and then to adapt our directions to theſe varieties. General precepts make but little impreſſion. Firſt, they are too trite, and are therefore careleſsly heard. Then, they ſeem too ſevere: and when it is once perceived that exceptions ſhould be made in enforcing them, the next ſtep is to doubt of their obligation in general. In ſhort, it will only happen now and then that they will be efficaciouſly recollected. — Whereas what exactly ſuits our manners, temperament and habits of life, attracts our attention, as a true picture of the world; it gives a ſpur to our conſciences, by ſhewing us the poſſibility of its accompliſhment; in a word, it every day finds ſo clear and ſuitable an application, that it recurs uncalled

uncalled for to our memory. Many of Zollikofer's ſermons are alſo delineations of our times and of our manners. It was not in the abſtract that he knew and taught virtue: but as it might and ſhould be practiſed in his place of abode, among the perſons before whom he appeared, in the actual ſtate of ſociety, at the preſent ſtage of civilization, of the ſciences, of luxury, or when it is particularly expoſed to difficulties and ſnares. The field of his inſtruction was hereby greatly enlarged, and the uſefulneſs of his moral leſſons much increaſed. His exhortations related to duties that are obligatory on mankind exactly in the preſent circumſtances: and his admonitions called the attention to ſuch obſtacles or encouragements to virtue, as every one daily meets with in his ordinary occupations and intercourſe: ſo as to enable him to ſay with certainty, this is the moment, this is the place for following that particular advice.

He happened to live at a time, when ſome tenets of dogmatical theology, which formerly had been tenaciouſly adhered to at leaſt among ſuch as were appointed to teach them, were beginning to be doubtful even to them. It was reſerved for our days to ſee the clergy themſelves take the torch of reaſon in their hands, for throwing a light on the particular objects of their ſtudy. Even Zollikofer never ſet about any inquiries till after he had entered on his office. His youth was paſſed among examples of a devotion nearly bordering on fanaticiſm, in which

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all reflection was laid aſide. During his college ſtudies and his preparatory exerciſes his efforts were employed ſolely in endeavouring to comprehend and to fix in his memory, what was taught him. Not till arrived at the age of manhood, when the influence of authority was diminiſhed with him, and his own underſtanding had attained to maturity; when the duty of a teacher ſummoned him to inveſtigate truths for himſelf, — did he gradually break looſe from the ſhackles of a ſyſtem, and with an unbiaſſed mind preſs forward into the ſanctuary of religion.

Accordingly, now, that the ſpirit of examination and philoſophical reſearch is ſpreading far and wide, now is the moſt arduous time for a preacher. The colliſions of duties are more diſtreſſing to him, and happen more frequently than ever. The volatile are carried too far by the ſpirit of innovation. Anxious and foreboding minds would ſtop the progreſs of truth. The concealment of particular opinions under ambiguous expreſſions, is revolting to the honeſt and ingenuous; and the plain and frank declaration of them, eſpecially if not yet brought to complete deciſive inward certainty, fills the humane and diſcreet with conſternation.

I think I am warranted in propoſing Zollikofer, who doubtleſs was ſenſible to theſe difficulties, as a pattern of the method in which they are to be ſurmounted. He was at all times heard to declare boldly and honeſtly, whatever he clearly and firmly acknowledged

acknowledged as true. In proportion as the light in his perceptions increaſed; as the certainty of his convictions augmented: his courage grew greater in departing from tenets hitherto believed. But in points, where he ſtill doubted, where he did not ſee thoroughly clear, he takes the vulgar propoſition, giving it the moſt rational interpretation and the moſt practically-uſeful application. He was neither haſtily carried away by every new and ſpecious idea, nor did he adhere to his early private opinions in ſpite of luminous reaſons againſt them. Habitually ſlow and deliberate in undertaking, but vigorous, reſolute and perſevering in execution: ſuch was his practice likewiſe in the inveſtigation of religious tenets. He examined leiſurely in ſilence and retirement, and carefully abſtained in the mean time from touching on the ſtill doubtful points. But what he diſcovered after ſuch a trial, no authority could induce him to ſurrender, and no dread of the judgment of mankind could deter him from avowing.

Zollikofer poſſeſſed a peculiar elevation of mind, a high ſenſe of liberty and independence which is not always the concomitant of great endowments, or of profound learning. The latter often ſubdues inſtead of raiſing the mind, by conſuming too much the bodily ſtrength, and leaving the man too little leiſure to enjoy the pleaſing ſenſations that courage inſpires. The condition of many of the learned, contributes

contributes to render them timid, baſhful and dependent on others. Zollikofer's natural diſpoſition to a generous and liberal conduct was not ſuppreſſed by the niggardlineſs of fortune. Though not born in ſhining circumſtances, yet he never was in want, and came early into a ſituation, which with his moderate deſires, and his prudence in the management of his income, might be deemed affluent. Therefore nobody was farther than he from flattering the great, — from courting their ſociety through vanity, or their patronage from motives of intereſt. But whenever viſited by them, as it very frequently happened, he behaved towards them with the dignity of a man, — not as one proud of his particular advantages, but as truly ſenſible of the rights of mankind. He never without reluctance reſorted to a place, where he muſt in any way be dependent on others, and hated every reſtraint, except what his vocation, his duty and philanthropy neceſſarily impoſed upon him.

His beneficence, like the reſt of his virtues, was active and concealed. The multitude of young perſons, who had recourſe to him in their neceſſities was not leſs than the number of thoſe who applied to him for advice. And neither the one nor the other departed unſatisfied from him, as far as his means or his ſagacity ſufficed to relieve their wants.

As nothing in general betrays more littleneſs of mind than avarice, ſo liberality is ever aſſociated with

with magnanimity. Zollikofer embraced with alacrity every occaſion of exerciſing this virtue, whereever propriety or charity called for expenſe, whereever relief was to be adminiſtered to the ſick and the infirm, wherever uſeful arts and ſciences were to be promoted and encouraged, he was ready with his offering.

In mentioning his greatneſs of mind, one feature of it muſt not be forgotten, which is, that he never ſtrove to recommend himſelf to the notice of any man, otherwiſe than by what that man himſelf might perceive and remark in him. He required no other reſpect, than that which naturally accrued to him from his perſonal qualities. I need not add that he never gave any one to underſtand that he was ſprung from an ancient and honourable family, that he had relations of conſequence in his own country, and numerous well-founded expectances. On this head any other, leſs intelligent man, might perhaps have been ſilent, whoſe anceſtors, for weighty reaſons, or compelled by circumſtances, had laid aſide the privileges of their birth. But likewiſe concerning all other teſtimonies or tokens of his worth, — of his fame which actually was ſpread throughout all Germany, of the veneration in which he was held by ſeveral great perſonages, of his extenſive literary correſpondence, which in general engaged him in the confidence of numbers of perſons hoping to obtain from him advice, ſupport or information, — of the approbation beſtowed on his writings, he

never gave the moſt diſtant intimation to a ſtranger, or even to an acquaintance, in order to draw from him a greater veneration. What he was he left all who converſed with him to judge of themſelves from what they heard him ſay or ſaw him do, not from what others thought of him.

In his domeſtic connections, where others for the moſt part betray coldneſs and neglect, reſerving their efforts to pleaſe for the entertainment of ſtrangers, Zollikofer was uniformly tender and aſſiduous in rendering himſelf agreeable. He was twice married. Each time he preferred the company of his wife to the generality of ſocieties, and made it his principal recreation. How great he thought his loſs in loſing his former, was evinced by the diſpoſition to melancholy, the inſenſibility towards whatever had before amuſed him, which her death brought upon him. And how happy he was in his ſecond, the extraordinary flow of ſpirits and good humour which every one remarked in him during his laſt matrimonial connection was a manifeſt proof. He was therefore by no means of a ſolitary and unſocial diſpoſition. It even ſeemed as though he abſolutely could not endure the lonelineſs of an unmarried ſtate. He had however no leſs averſion to large companies, as being incapable of playing a part in them to his own ſatisfaction. His ſpouſe and one or two friends, were ſufficient to his entertainment, whether he were deſirous of nothing more than to unbend his mind, or ſought for the enjoyment

enjoyment of ſocial ſatisfaction in their converſe. He did not however avoid company: and in any ſociety that he happened to fall into, or was taken by his friends or relations, or led by official or other accidental connections, he was eaſy and even cheerful, which is rarely the caſe with perſons of his talents. He was always ſeen to be in his proper place in every company, even where the ordinary tone was extremely different from his, ſince he uniformly appeared in it with dignity, and carrried thither reaſon and judgment, by means whereof he either kept thoſe that were preſent within bounds, or was able with ſtrict propriety to take part in their mirth.

Zollikofer was fond of a country-life, like almoſt all who are addicted to meditation and are ſuſceptible of moral ſenſations. The former never ſucceeds ſo well as in rural retirement, and the latter find nowhere ſo much nouriſhment as amid the beauteous ſcenes of nature. Some of his beſt performances may certainly be dated from his retreat at Gohlis *. Or even if he did not actually purſue his literary labours there; yet nothing more contributed to recruit his abilities for them, than the tranquillity and pleaſure he enjoyed in this rural cottage during the few laſt ſummers of his life.

* A pleaſant retired village in the vicinity of Leipſic, where Zollikofer for ſeveral years was wont to paſs the ſummer.

What neceſſarily belongs to the enjoyment of the country he perfectly underſtood; unleſs we bring with us the tumult of the town, or intend to addict ourſelves to the occupations of rural œconomy; I mean the ability to be completely at eaſe by the ſide of the partner of our life, or in the company of a friend, without feeling it irkſome, — to liſten to the agreeable impreſſions of ſenſible objects, the ſoft ſuggeſtions of the fancy or the gentle emotions of the heart, as they ſpontaneouſly ariſe, on a bright calm evening, in a verdant bower, or in a ſhady grove, without feeling the want of ſprightlier ideas and more vehement agitations. To the man of a reſtleſs active ſpirit, the country-life will ſoon be tireſome and he muſt run into ſociety, or employ himſelf in buſineſs, in order to procure for his mind more ſubſtantial diet, than meads and groves and rippling brooks can yield. — The man of an indolent turn, dozes away the ſolitary hours in thoſe delightful ſcenes, where he hoped to find content. On the other hand, he whoſe activity is continual, but compoſed, who poſſeſſes genius and knowledge, but without that reſtleſſneſs and ambition by which theſe properties are frequently attended; he is formed by nature for the enjoyment of rural delights. — Particularly if the ſentiments excited by the beauties of nature, are united with thoſe of devotion. For, if religion had no other influence on our happineſs, than by animating nature to our ſight, and cauſing us to perceive, in the ſmiling ſcenes of

ſpring and ſummer, which we otherwiſe ſhould only contemplate as genial and pleaſant, ſubjects of grateful emotion: ſhe would even then be a noble benefactreſs to the human race. Judging from what we know of Zollikofer, we may ſee how amply he was qualified for reliſhing the infuſive force of ſpring on man.

The delineation of the man that offends not in word, after the expreſſion of the apoſtle James, is one of his fineſt compoſitions and a real picture of its author. Few perſons are ſo attentive as he was, to ſay nothing untrue. For that reaſon he was leſs loquacious than others, as it was impoſſible for him to ſay what he did not think, or to ſpeak on what he had not previouſly conſidered. He knew that it was not in the power of man, to obſerve the moſt perfect ſincerity, or by the communication of his ſentiments to be uſeful to others, if he were as prompt with his judgment, his advice, his praiſe, as another in communicating to him his opinion, making known to him his circumſtances, or reading to him his work. He therefore had the appearance of being reſerved, diſtant, ſometimes not obſequious enough and cold. But this was becauſe his mind was ſtill intenſely occupied with the ſentiments or the concerns of the other, and he would not open himſelf to him, till he had fully determined within, what he held to be true, or what was the beſt method to be adopted on the occaſion.

This is the man that may be truſted, one of whom we can with confidence affirm, that his thoughts may be known from what he utters. But this quality cannot be made to conſiſt with any extraordinary degree of courteſy. Mankind require more, than it is permiſſible or poſſible to grant them. He therefore who would always judge in ſuch a manner as to agree with them, ſo praiſe or blame as to obtain their praiſe, greet them ſo tenderly or ſo reſpectfully as to ſatisfy their pretenſions: muſt frequently ſwerve from the truth, and deliver his favourable opinions or ſentiments to them in far ſtronger expreſſions, than are conſiſtent with thoſe he really entertains. Zollikofer thought himſelf bound on ſuch occaſions rather to lower the expreſſion, for fear of exciting undue expectations.

Perhaps here may be a certain latitude in the path of virtue. This ſtrict adherence to veracity in ſocial intercourſe ſeems hardly poſſible to all, to all not a duty. Temperament muſt in ſome ſort decide, what conduct our reaſon can approve. There are timid and conſtitutionally delicate perſons, who abſolutely cannot be ſo deaf to the apparent deſires of people with whom they converſe, as to refrain from ſaying what they would gladly hear. Habit and the general uſage exert on others too forcible a ſway: and the cuſtomary forms of approbation, of praiſe and aſſent have already eſcaped their lips, ere they have duly conſidered whether or not they exactly correſpond with their feelings. Others again have too

too little confidence in their own ſagacity, and feel not ſufficient force in themſelves, to deliver their verdict on the ſpot, or to affirm what they but dimly perceive, if in oppoſition to the judgment of others. As all men have not preciſely the ſame conſtitution and natural character: ſo likewiſe have they not all preciſely the ſame duties to perform. A man like Zollikofer ſhould endeavour chiefly by truth and ſolidity to render his converſation uſeful. It may be lawful for another even to aim at pleaſing by the graces and pleaſantry of his.

From ſuch a man it is to be expected, that he ſhould be conſtant in his inclinations, and particularly in his friendſhips. In fact he never alienated himſelf from any of the perſons with whom he had once, after trial and from ſelection, entered into connection. I myſelf uninterruptedly enjoyed his friendſhip from the firſt moment that he favoured me with his intimacy. In like manner he bore with him to the grave the love and veneration of all who had once devoted theſe ſentiments to him. Whatever is true and real, is in its nature conſtant: and even the verſatility of others is fixed by a firm and always conſiſtent man.

One who acts upon principle, is diſtinguiſhed by his demeanour in the little occurrences of ordinary life, no leſs than by tranſactions of greater moment. The order and regularity that reigned in Zollikofer's diſcourſes and actions, extended likewiſe to his domeſtic eſtabliſhment, his economy, the appropri-

ation of his income, and his ſocial amuſements. He, as all men of refined ſenſibility do, loved neatneſs above all things, and a certain degree of ornament, which is only cleanlineſs heightened. Everything about him, cloaths, furniture, were all in this taſte, — not elegant, but decent. — He cheerfully divided his loaf with a friend, and knew how to value the pleaſure of a ſmall convivial board. In a little circle of intimates, his cheerfulneſs roſe even to hilarity: he was then agreeably jocoſe, and laughed with all his heart at the witty conceits or the facetious ſallies of another. — I know of no ſight more pleaſing, than that of a venerable, uſually grave man occaſionally indulging in mirth: and I have more than once enjoyed this pleaſure in Zollikofer's company.

Were I to judge of the peculiarity of his talents; I ſhould ſay, that his prominent abilities conſiſted not in profound philoſophical penetration, not in poetical flights of fancy, but in plain and ſound ſenſe, an acute obſervation and the art of diſquiſition. Perſpicuous thoughts were always the ground-plot with him. Thence aroſe firſt ſentiment; by this ſometimes the fire of imagination was kindled. Had he been employed in compoſitions, where ſentiment alone was intended to prevail, or where he was not ſufficiently prepared by meditation, he might not have been ſo happy as in thoſe calculated merely for inſtruction. His addreſſes to the deity, are not inferior to his ſermons. In his exerciſes of devo-

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tion, his fineſt pieces are thoſe which are drawn up in the form of meditations.

He laid no claim to an extenſive erudition, although he was deeply verſed in more than one department of literature, and was daily increaſing his fund of knowledge. Like moſt men of ſentiment and reflection, he was continually learning, and took pleaſure in his ſtudies, though he imagined he knew but little. The truth is, that, as his hours of labour were all taken up with his own thoughts, and with the actual, living world, which he ever made it his object to inform and to improve: the thoughts of others and the peruſal of books were reſerved only for his hours of recreation; — from which he therefore obtained rather food and ſuſtenance for his mind, than an accumulated ſtore of learning.

His judgment in all matters that are amenable to the bar of reaſon, was extremely correct: and by it his taſte was governed in objects of ſentiment. On the value of literary, particularly philoſophical productions he pronounced as a competent judge: and had a nice diſcernment in the truly good ſtyle in every claſs, as he was a complete maſter of it in his own. He loved poetry and was ſenſible to its charms; neither was he indifferent to works of art. And though his complacency in the latter did not riſe to extaſy, nor his ſkill to that of a connoiſſeur: yet he might paſs his judgment on them even among both connoiſſeurs and amateurs, without fear of ſcorn.

His ſtyle like his perſon had a certain ſolemnity, which at firſt ſight was not entirely free from ſtiffneſs and formality. The former in his earlier productions was rather ſurcharged with epithets, and was thought to border on the declamatory. As the number however of the topics he had to diſcourſe upon, increaſed with the increaſing maturity of his judgement: ſo the number of his words was diminiſhed. His ſtyle was more compreſſed, his periods ſhorter. If he at times repeats the ſame thought; it is only becauſe he wants to place it in different points of view. If he expreſſes the ſubject or predicate of his theme in ſeveral terms; there are juſt ſo many references to it, which he illuſtrates by them. Nevertheleſs his ſermons always retained ſomewhat of rhetorical ornament. They might therefore be ſuppoſed not perfectly adapted to the comprehenſion of the vulgar, to whom however the teacher of religion in his diſcourſes ought always to have regard. But beſides that the aſſembly before whom Zollikofer preached, contained fewer perſons of the inferior claſſes, than the congregations of moſt of the clergy: neither his matter nor his ſtyle are at all difficult, whenever they are only aſſiſted by a delivery, which diſtinguiſhes what is diſtinct, and properly aſſociates the conjunct propoſitions and ideas. Such was Zollikofer's delivery accompanied by that grave deportment which commanded reſpect, and attended him in all the actions of his life. And this endowment of a ſuitable declamation

tion is not one of the leaſt merits in the functions of the office which he filled. It was not his action, it was not the language of his looks by which his pulpit eloquence was heightened. The motions of his body and of his hands were too uniform, the modulations of his voice not ſufficiently varied: but his enunciation was ſo clear and diſtinct, and particularly the emphaſis which he laid on every word was ſo adapted to the impreſſion which the concomitant idea was deſigned to make, and ſo ſuited to the proper illuſtration of the ſenſe, that the beſt judges were ſenſibly affected by the charms of an eloquent diſcourſe, and thoſe of the lower orders completely enabled to underſtand what they heard.

Zollikofer was neither vehement nor inceſſant in his application: but his whole heart and mind and his undivided attention were fixt on what he was about. Hence it was, that although, beſides what the duties of his function required, he was obliged to devote much of his time to ſuch as came to conſult his advice or to aſk relief, and even to viſitors from curioſity or ceremony, — conſiderable portions likewiſe to the care of his health and to repoſe: yet the number of his literary performances is not ſmall. He was free from one fault which authors and ſcholars are apt to fall into; that of putting off what they have to do, till they are compelled by neceſſity to ſet about it, or the moment is come when it is wanted. He ſat down to work whenever he felt inclination and ability for it, was never in haſte

haſte and never dilatory. And in this manner his beſt works were compoſed. Every delay is always an effect either of want of reſolution or of indolence of mind. The contrary procedure of Zollikofer is therefore a ſign of his ſelf-command, and of the little viciſſitude in his mental powers.

Patience is the property of all men of firm character and ſound ſenſe. To complain ſeems to them a degradation. Beſides, as they are not apt to do anything uſeleſs: they refrain from complaint, likewiſe becauſe it ſeldom contributes anything to the alleviation of the grievance. Zollikofer was one of this claſs. He more freely admitted his friends to a ſhare in his joys than in his ſorrows. If there was one tie of confidence between his friends and him the leſs on that account, there was one motive the leſs likewiſe to difference and miſunderſtanding between them. For nothing oftener parts friends, than when one believes that the other does not take ſufficient intereſt in his diſtreſs: and nothing is more common, than for the complainer, even with the beſt diſpoſitions in the world, not to find that participation which he expected.

Zollikofer from his very infancy ſuffered from weak nerves and from a conſumptive habit; two complaints, one rendering life exceedingly troubleſome, and the other attacking it immediately. The former is apt to render a man ill-humoured and moroſe, by

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ſo frequently diſturbing him in his occupations, and the other to fill him with anxiety from the danger with which it daily threatens him. Zollikofer was not thus affected by either: or if he felt irritations of this ſort, he got the better of them before they were apparent to the byſtanders. He was obliged to give up more of his time to recreation, than one of his active turn of mind could have wiſhed: but he never complained of it. His pulpit exertions were often painful to him: but as long as he thought he could go through them, he bore the uneaſineſs, without ſpeaking much of it. And if he let anything eſcape him concerning it, it was only when he thought it neceſſary for procuring himſelf a little relief. The profound ſilence which, as I have juſt remarked, he obſerved concerning ſuch diſeaſes as attacked his ſpirits, diſables me from judging how painful they were with which he had to contend. But by what I can infer from ſome accounts, his equal ſerenity was not always the conſequence of a condition totally void of trouble, but of his perſevering patience.

I proceed now to his piety, the virtue which cements the reſt together, by deriving every kind of good and all our duties from one common ſource. It was the pure conſequence of his convictions, as theſe proceeded from his own reflections.

Zollikofer's

Zollikofer's devotion conſiſted chiefly in the contemplation of thoſe truths concerning God and our relations to him, and his piety in the aſſiduous diſcharge of his duties. — As he never made a ſhow of thoſe virtues, which are properly calculated to be known to others, ſince they nowhere find their objects but in ſociety and make its utility their aim: ſo it is to be expected, that he withdrew even from the ſight of his friends for thoſe exerciſes of devotion which relate only to him who performs them, and require not the participation of others during the act. Nevertheleſs from ſome emotions with which I have occaſionally ſeen him affected by the thoughts of God, while contemplating his works and the ways of his providence, I am ſomewhat enabled to judge, how greatly his ſoul muſt have been affected, when he reſigned himſelf entirely to theſe impreſſions. Accordingly, I ſhould ſuppoſe, that in this particular alſo his feelings were ſtronger and more ardent than the expreſſions of them: and in like manner as under a certain appearance of coldneſs and indifference he was a tender huſband and a warm friend; ſo in fact his devotion was frequently fervent, when he ſeemed only engaged in calm meditation. Perhaps with perſons who like Zollikofer expreſs their ideas ſo well, and their feelings ſo imperfectly, the reaſon may be, that the former are clearly evolved and diſtinct, the latter extremely concentrated, as it were indiviſible, and therefore the more intrinſic.

A life

A life thus uniformly led on rational and public-ſpirited principles, muſt neceſſarily have had that effect on Zollikofer's contemporaries, which virtue in conjunction with good ſenſe has in all ages produced among mankind, when it has not been confined in obſcurity by untoward circumſtances, or by the ſplendor of proſperity excited the envy and oppoſition of others — it muſt have acquired him the eſteem and reſpect of all that knew him. Zollikofer enjoyed this eſteem and reſpect in a ſuperior degree, and that in the very city and the very country in which he lived, — a freſh proof of his real worth. Great talents procure renown; but affection and eſteem on the part of thoſe with whom we daily converſe, can only be acquired by our virtues. If prophets are ſeldom much accounted of in their own country or in the place of their reſidence: it is generally becauſe great prophets are not always good men, becauſe the teachers of nations are often fooliſh fathers of families, falſe or inſignificant friends, and troubleſome or ridiculous companions. Qualities which excite veneration for a man at a diſtance, muſt naturally do ſo likewiſe in his vicinity, unleſs they are obſcured by ſomething in him, or are of ſuch a ſpecies, that they *can* only be known to a few: in which latter caſe they, like the merits of the algebraiſt, muſt ſeek their admirers in a larger circle, ſince probably they will find none in the ſmaller that ſurrounds them. The qualities of a good preacher are not of this kind. His lot is

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far preferable to that of all other authors; he is ſo happy as to have the perſons whom he inſtructs for his neighbours and townſmen; to communicate to themſelves the good ſentiments that he has diſcovered for their benefit; and may be ſecure both of the utility which he is the means of effecting, and of the affection which he thence acquires. Had there been in Zollikofer's heart the leaſt ſeed of vanity, it muſt have ripened in ſuch circumſtances as his. But amidſt the unanimous praiſe that was beſtowed upon him, and the univerſal veneration in which he was held, he continued as modeſt and unaſſuming, as ſenſible of his infirmities, as free from arrogance, as when he was an unknown youth.

The laſt ſcene of his life was, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, of a piece with the whole: he was when dying what he had always been through life. Thoſe who attended or were about him in theſe awful moments, are better qualified to inform the public of the particular circumſtances of his departure, than I can be. I only know from the accounts that have been communicated to me, that, judging from ſeveral of his actions, he certainly expected his diſſolution, while he carefully avoided everything that could excite in his family the apprehenſion of loſing him; that in his laſt days he preferred entire ſolitude even to the preſence of his wife and friends, though at the ſame time he gave them the moſt convincing

convincing proofs that he ſtill loved them as tenderly as ever, and that he retired from them only in order that they might ſuffer the leſs, and that he might reſerve his ſtrength entire for the conflict he had himſelf to ſuſtain.

To begin preparation for death when he is already at the door, is a fooliſh attempt, which could never enter the thoughts of ſuch a perſon as Zollikofer, and which he had no occaſion to make. But for bearing more eaſily the ſtruggles with which the diſſolution of the body is inevitably attended, for keeping preſent to the mind the long foſtered principles of religion, and the well known grounds of conſolation and ſatisfaction it affords, when aſſailed by the moſt haraſſing ſenſations from without: no method is more effectual, at leaſt in my eſtimation, — which is here in perfect uniſon with the behaviour of my friend, — than retreat, not only from noiſe, but likewiſe from whatever may excite any lively emotion. The ſoul ſhould now be entirely ſhut up within herſelf, entirely occupied with her own concerns, and waſte as little of her ſtrength as poſſible, on external objects, overburdened already by the dying body. I am well aware, that a great difference is here occaſioned by circumſtances, conſtitution, the ſtructure of the nerves, the nature of the diſeaſe, and that one good man cannot exactly die like another good man, any more than all can exhibit their virtue in preciſely the ſame manner during life. But, whether from the uniformity in our characters,

characters, whether I am better able to tranſport myſelf into Zollikofer's ſituation, becauſe I knew him ſo thoroughly and loved him ſo cordially; I am ſure that I can perfectly figure to myſelf why he was deſirous of being entirely alone when ſick and dying, ſincerely as he might have wiſhed to ſhare his life with certain perſons; and I approve his conduct, that even in theſe moments he acted as he thought was for the beſt.

In this reſolute proſecution of his beſt perceptions, and with that compoſure and ſerenity of mind, which is ever the effect of it, he reſigned his ſpirit, without a murmur at the languiſhing and painful ſtate, in which he was, in ſure and certain hope of that which awaited him, in calm reliance upon God from the conviction of his goodneſs. Thus in a few rapid ſtrokes was his death ſketched out to me by a friend. It reſts with him to finiſh for the public the picture of what he himſelf beheld. I have chiefly confined myſelf to his life of which I alſo was a witneſs; and in the remembrance of the ſound underſtanding, the public-ſpirit and the ſelf-command that reigned therein throughout, I ſhall always find a faithful monitor at hand, to guard me againſt ſurpriſe, to reſiſt tumultuous paſſion, or rouze my drooping ſpirit to fortitude both in action and forbearance, and lead me to meet difficulty or danger without diſmay.

THE END.

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